

# **A Review of the Digbeth Trust's Activities 2001-04**

## **Final Report**

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# Executive Summary

## Background

Established in 1984, the Digbeth Trust is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Its principal activity is: "To provide independent, impartial support and advice to voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) in Birmingham and surrounding areas which will enable them to take a strategic business-planning approach towards the development of new and existing community-led services for the client groups they serve." The Trust commissions frequent reviews of its activities. This is the fourth. Earlier reviews were conducted in 1992, 1996 and 1999. The purpose of this review was:

- To test the effectiveness of the Trust's activities across the programmes it managed and administered during 2001-04.
- To find out what has worked well and what has worked less well.
- To identify feedback from VCOs, programme officers and community representatives that will inform the future development of the Trust and enable it to continue operating successfully and for the benefit of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in a rapidly changing marketplace.
- To provide evidence that will be of benefit to the Trust in the development of future funding bids.
- And to propose changes that may need to be made in order to ensure that future services meet client need and create a better fit with changing policy priorities.

While not a full strategic review, this research does have *strategic implications* for the Trust and for the sector it operates in and should be seen in this context.

## Summary of Findings

- 1) **Increasing complexity of operation:** During 2001-04 the Trust has worked under contract across seven different funding programmes to provide VCS support and small grants management and administration. This is a major change: in 1998/99 the Trust worked across only three programmes.
- 2) **Consistent, tangible benefits for VCOs:** The Trust's intervention in third party funding programmes has produced real, tangible benefits for the VCOs it has helped deliver support and resources to and in this respect the findings of this review are entirely consistent with all three preceding ones. For the groups for whom this model of support is most appropriate, it can be seen to work in an often exemplary fashion:
  - It has assisted over 200 predominantly small, volunteer-led VCOs – many from BME communities and many receiving developmental assistance for the first time – to access professional services and other support which 92% of them say they could not otherwise have afforded. This work brought almost £640K in additional support resources into the sector.
  - Roughly one-third of groups assisted say the help provided by the Trust was instrumental in them gaining the skills and confidence to subsequently complete successful funding applications totalling almost £2m to over 40 other funders. For every £1 the Trust spent in assisting groups, VCOs raised over £3.

- Programme managers, community representatives and beneficiary VCOs all report extremely high levels of satisfaction with the Trust's work. Amongst VCOs, over half say the assistance received helped them develop better project management skills and deliver better services to their clients. Between one-third and a half report other performance improvements.
- 3) **Inflexibility and lack of adaptability:** But the management, distribution and administration of third party grants funds (typically within regeneration or neighbourhood renewal programmes) has come to dominate what the Trust does and as a primary method of providing sector support has proven inflexible and insufficiently adaptable to meet the widest range of VCS support needs. In particular:
- It rarely incorporates practical, follow-on support for those groups that need it, is problematical to co-ordinate and produces a disjointed and fragmentary support environment further complicated by programme-specific restrictions.
  - It is not meeting all the demand. During 2001-04, the Trust alone received enquiries from over 320 groups whose needs could not be met by the third party programmes funding its work and the Trust typically has a waiting list of around 150 VCOs at any given time.
- 4) More worryingly for the Trust, the provision of a niche income-earning service in grants management may also be a declining marketplace. It also produces heavy and complex workloads for the Trust and leaves little time or capacity to invest in developing the kind of strategic relationships the Trust requires if it is to successfully reposition itself in the rapidly changing VCS support infrastructure.

## **Recommendations**

The Trust, therefore, as a matter of urgency needs to:

- 1) **Establish a more flexible, more adaptable and responsive VCS support programme** not tied solely to small grants provision. It needs resources that can be treated much more as a discretionary operating budget rather than pre-packaged small grants.
- 2) **Take a much more active role in the sector's wider debates**, especially those regarding the development of a stronger and more effective support infrastructure.
- 3) **Operate in closer alliance** with other strategic partners.
- 4) Better describe and 'segment' its service provision, distinguishing more clearly between the fee-earning services it provides for the regeneration and neighbourhood renewal sector and those it provides to grassroots groups.
- 5) Address its poor profile and the widespread misconceptions that exist regarding its role/mission. In this context it should also consider whether the Digbeth Trust 'brand' continues to provide an adequate and accurate description of what the Trust is.

## 1.0 SCOPE, CONTEXT & METHODOLOGY OF THIS REVIEW

### 1.1 Scope and Context

This is the fourth full review of the Digbeth Trust's activities. Earlier reviews were conducted in 1992 (Mike Dando), 1996 (Mike Dando & Alison Millward Associates) and 1999 (The Phoenix Partnership).

While this review certainly has *strategic implications* for the Trust it should be emphasised that it has not first and foremost been a full-scale strategic review. It does need to be seen in the wider context of the changing environment in which the Trust operates, of course, but its main purpose has been as follows:

- To test the effectiveness of the Trust's activities across the range of programmes it has managed and administered during the period under review (2001-04).
- To find out what has worked well and what has worked less well.
- To identify feedback from beneficiary groups, programme officers and community representatives that will inform the future development of the Trust and enable it to continue operating successfully and for the benefit of the VCS in a rapidly changing marketplace.
- To provide evidence that will be of benefit to the Trust in the development of future funding bids.
- And to propose changes that the Trust may need to make in order to ensure that its future support package meets client need and creates a better fit with emerging/changing policy priorities.

### 1.2 Methodology

The review has drawn on evidence and information from the following sources:

- A postal questionnaire survey of *all* beneficiary groups supported with grant aid or similar during the period 2001-04 has formed the core of information-gathering. **This is explained in more detail below.**
- Desk analysis of existing data and monitoring information produced (and aggregated) by the Trust and covering all of the programmes within which it has operated/delivered during 2001-04. **These are detailed in the following section at Table 1.**
- And semi-structured interviews with programme officers, community representatives and beneficiary groups.

Findings from the survey, the programme officers and community representative interviews and the VCO focus groups are drawn together in section 3.0.

This review has also been the source for programme-specific sub-analyses for the SRB6 'North West Corridors of Regeneration' scheme and the Greets Green Partnership NDC programme, prepared for the Trust by Third Sector Services. These are contained in separate documents. **For this reason, this overall review focuses on generally applicable lessons arising from the Trust's work, rather than the programme-specific.**

### ***The questionnaire survey***

The postal questionnaire survey has been the core information-gathering tool as far as the overall review is concerned and it is therefore worth saying a few words about this aspect of the work in particular.

The questionnaire – reproduced in full in **Appendix 1** – was designed in discussion with the Trust and constructed to capture key information regarding the *impact* and *effectiveness* of the 'grants plus support model' for groups that have been its beneficiary. It asked questions in four distinct areas:

- The impact and outcomes of the small grants provision.
- The quality of the development support and assistance provided.
- Whether the support provided had enabled groups to subsequently secure or lever-in funding from other sources.
- Whether the assistance provided had made an overall difference to groups' skills and capacity and whether this was felt to be a permanent change.

Questionnaires were sent to 150 groups – i.e. all groups assisted during the 2001-04 period, with the exception of:

- Those in receipt of ESF/SRB Global Grants: this programme comprised *project funding* rather than grants or other resources to enable organisational development and therefore is not included in this review. It has in any case been the subject of separate evaluation by the Digbeth Trust;
- A small number of groups whose consultancy work was still in progress.
- A small number whose grants had either been abandoned or terminated.

- And those groups signposted or referred as part of the Trust's 'clearing house' role in dealing with enquiries from VCOs, partner agencies, consultants and statutory agencies over and above the work conducted under the programmes it managed. These groups were not included in the survey although the work entailed did impact significantly on the Trust's staff and resources during the period under review.

77 completed questionnaires were returned – a response rate of just over 51.3%.

The Trust would like to thank the following who gave generously of their time in order to contribute to this review during consultation sessions and interviews:

- **Deanne Dunstan** previously in charge of Birmingham City Council Organisational Development training grants for the Economic Development Department.
- **James Betjemann** Programme Manager, SRB6 North West Corridors of Regeneration Programme.
- **Phil Ware** Birmingham City Council, previously Sparkbrook & Sparkhill Area Regeneration Initiative [SSTAR] and SRB6.
- **Theresa Gillard** BVSC, Senior Sector Support Manager with responsibility for SRB4, SRB6, CABBIO and Global Grants programmes.
- **Katherine Hewitt** Acting Community Regeneration Manager, Greets Green Partnership NDC.
- **Maureen Lambert** community representative and Grants Panel member, Greets Green Partnership NDC.
- **Lloyd Blake** Chair, SRB6 Community Participation Network (CPN) and Chair of SRB6 CPN Small Grants Panel
- Management Committee members of the Guru Nanak Community Centre, West Bromwich.
- Management Committee members of the Birmingham Bangladeshi League, Handsworth, Birmingham.
- Staff of the AEKTA project, Handsworth, Birmingham.
- And the staff and Trustees of The Digbeth Trust.

## **2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE TRUST'S WORK 2001-04**

### **2.1 Understanding The Digbeth Trust**

Established in 1984, the Digbeth Trust is a registered charity (number: 517343) and operates as a company limited by guarantee (company number: 1985299).

The Trust's principal activity is to provide "independent, impartial support and advice to voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) in Birmingham and surrounding areas which will enable them to take a strategic business-planning approach towards the development of new and existing community-led services for the client groups they serve."

The Trust does this by:

- Mobilising a range of developmental and support services to assist VCOs, including face-to-face developmental support and technical assistance, self-help and mentoring.
- And providing access to a range of funding streams and programmes where grants and other resources can be used to commission independent specialist support and assistance from appropriately skilled consultants who are used to working in a variety of community settings.

The Trust characterises this approach as 'grants plus support'. It has found during the course of its twenty years' experience that resources are better targeted and more effectively spent when the commissioning of external specialists and consultants to assist VCOs is underpinned by initial face-to-face development worker support. This is aimed at helping groups analyse their needs more accurately so that clearly focused commissioning briefs for the work of consultants and specialists can be developed. The Trust has for many years maintained a register of appropriately skilled consultants and is currently working with Government Office for the West Midlands and other partners to develop this register as the platform for a technical aid service for the VCS.

The Trust has a long track record in supporting grassroots groups in communities that are poorly served by mainstream services. In this, the Trust's aim is to provide support services that:

- Can strengthen grassroots groups and ensure their long-term sustainability.
- Can help groups address evidenced and specific disadvantage and improve the quality of life in the areas they serve.
- Foster community development and local enterprise.
- Work in partnership with other key agencies, funders and programmes to ensure that the resources flowing into the VCS at a local level are maximised.

The Trust is a membership organisation. Membership is free and currently stands at over 100 (28 individuals and 77 organisations – many of the latter are past grant recipients).

### **2.1.1 Key Changes in the Trust's Operation Since the 1999 Review**

In the years immediately leading up to the 1999 review, the Trust's activities were delivered across three funding programmes. In the period 2001-04, the Trust has managed small grants schemes and developmental support across **seven different 'third party' programmes**. In addition, the Trust has also undertaken a number of other strategic activities, including:

- Being a founding member of Birmingham Community Empowerment Network (B:CEN) in July 2001 (the Trust remains on B:CEN's steering group) and an active member of Birmingham & Solihull Social Economy Consortium (BSSEC).
- Partnership building under the SRB4 CABBIO initiative ('Capacity Building by Intermediary Organisations').
- Research into the role and development of community consultants and development workers.
- And providing management services to the William Dudley Trust.

The Trust also handles around 100 enquiries a year from across the VCS – usually for developmental assistance and value-for-money consultants – **which fall outside its funded programmes** but nonetheless require and receive valuable signposting and referral support from the Trust.

The past decade, then, has seen the Trust move from being a largely independent grant-making Trust (its core costs met by the Inner City Partnership Programme for almost twelve years) to working on a fee-earning basis within regeneration and neighbourhood renewal programmes where it has specialised in providing a specialist small grants management and

administration service *as a means of delivering support and benefits for local groups*. This has marked a fundamental shift in how the Trust operates in order to achieve its mission and in the volume and complexity of its workloads. It has, as a consequence, moved from working largely independently to working much more closely with other funders and policy-makers in order to deliver its mission of supporting and strengthening VCOs and generate operating revenue by providing a small grants management service under contract to the regeneration sector and other programmes.

The service provided by the Trust to the regeneration sector and other programmes generally includes:

- All aspects of the grants application process, with decision-making processes/structures that include local community representatives from within the catchment area of the programmes concerned.
- Initial developmental support and skilled analysis from a Development Worker to ensure that groups applying have realistic and feasible project ideas, meet programme criteria, are 'bona fide' voluntary or community organisations, are likely to benefit from the nature of the funding available, and are assisted to develop work programmes and/or commissioning briefs which will enable them to engage and successfully manage the services of an appropriate specialist or consultant.
- Signposting, referral and other information in the cases where applicants do not meet programme criteria.

The complications arising from this method of operation have wider implications and these are dealt with later in this report.

## **2.2 Programmes Assisted by the Trust 2001-04**

In the period 2001-04, the funders on whose behalf the Trust has managed small grants funds and the programmes within which these were located are described briefly in **Table 1** over-page, along with numbers of groups assisted and resources distributed in the course of providing this assistance.

**Table 1. Digbeth Trust: Programmes and Grants Funds Managed 2001—04**

Client / Programme	Resources allocated to supporting VCOs (£000)	Number of VCOs assisted
<p><b>1) The Community Development Project</b>                      Three funding streams managed and delivered by the Trust, supported by a full-time Development Worker, directly employed by the Trust. The project enabled the Trust to provide dedicated face-to-face development worker support for VCOs in Birmingham needing assistance with feasibility research, project and organisational development. The funding streams were:</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Organisational Development grants 2001-02</b> Funder: Birmingham City Council Economic Development Department. Training, organisational development and management committee skills for VCOs working with the unemployed and those excluded from the labour market</li> </ul>	£45,979	32
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CABBIO 2001-02.</b> Funder: SRB4. A voluntary sector-led capacity-building small grants programme for which Birmingham Voluntary Service Council was the accountable body.</li> </ul>	£40,000	18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Architectural studies, 2001-04.</b> Funder: the Community Fund. A budget to assist VCOs in the purchasing of specialist architectural and premises-related technical expertise.</li> </ul>	£29,800	13
<p><b>2) SRB6 (North West Corridors of Regeneration – Birmingham) “Community Participation Network”, 2001-03</b>                      Small capacity-building grants to enable VCOs in the area covered by this SRB programme to ‘buy-in’ developmental and other expertise from appropriately skilled specialists and consultants. These grants were managed under the auspices of the Community Participation Network.</p>	£174,537	55
<p><b>3) Greets Green First Steps Project</b>                      Funder: Greets Green Partnership NDC (Sandwell MBC), 2001-04. A 3-year community empowerment project supporting VCOs in the Greets Green area of West Bromwich, Sandwell. Project aims to strengthen the capacity of organisations and individuals from, and contribute to the regeneration of, the area through a mix of small grants and development support.</p>	£100,202	25
<p><b>4) Sparkhill, Sparkbrook, Tyseley Area Regeneration Initiative (SSTARI)</b>                      Business planning support. Funder: SRB2. This was <b>not</b> a grants-based programme but funded development support and assistance for groups which was delivered by the Trust’s Development Worker.</p>	£000	19

<b>5) Global Grants **</b> Funder: ESF & SRB4, 2001—03. A grants budget to enable VCOs in Birmingham to fund projects which move people facing or at risk of social exclusion towards the labour market.	<b>£244,349</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Total resources allocated to assisting VCOs / No. of groups assisted</b>	<b>£634,867</b>	<b>201</b>

\*\* The Global Grants programme comprised *project funding* rather than grants or other resources to enable organisational development and therefore was not included in the postal survey undertaken by Third Sector Services. It has been the subject of a separate evaluation by the Digbeth Trust.

Thus it can be seen that during the period under review the Trust has:

- Provided developmental assistance – either through in-house or freelance development workers (with the exception of the Global Grants programme) – to 201 VCOs
- And has distributed almost £635K directly to VCOs to enable various kinds of development support to be purchased.

### 2.3 Current Thinking & Planning within the Trust

The findings of the review are also intended to enable a 'reality check' of current thinking and planning within the Trust.

As noted earlier, the Trust's mission remains that of providing independent, impartial support and advice to voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) in Birmingham and surrounding areas which will enable them to take a strategic business-planning approach towards the development of new and existing community-led services for the client groups they serve.

In past years the Trust pursued this aim largely through small grants made on a more or less independent basis from long-term Inner City Partnership Programme (ICPP) resources. However, with the winding-up of the ICPP, the Trust faced two problems:

- **How to continue supporting the VCS** with a tried and tested model of 'grants plus support', which successive reviews have highlighted the effectiveness of.
- **And how to generate income which would allow the Trust to continue functioning** and, if at all possible, to retain some development and support capacity in-house via directly-employed Development Workers.

This is a challenge that the Trust has risen to with some considerable success. But it has not been a 'neutral' process and has had a significant impact on both the volume and complexity of the Trust's workloads. It can now also be seen that while the management and distribution of third-party grant funds has proven extremely effective **for those groups most suited to such an approach**, it has also proven to be a relatively **inflexible** means of meeting the full diversity of VCS support needs. For example, 'third party' grants 'products' are, by their very nature, frequently:

- Made available in pre-determined 'portions' rather than as 'customisable' on-demand support that can be tailored to meet the needs of a wide range of VCOs **at different stages in their development**.
- Geographically restricted and time-limited.
- And tied to specific programme themes and outputs which make it very difficult to offer VCOs support which is matched as closely as possible to their aspirations, circumstances and needs.

**The Trust's experience suggests that a more flexible, adaptable and responsive form of support is required if the needs of the widest diversity of VCOs are to be met and in recent months has focused its forward planning energies on how best to recapture this flexibility.**

The Trust is also concerned that wider strategic developments in the 'marketplace' for voluntary sector support have not been sufficiently factored in to the organisation's own development plans, in particular:

- The wider infrastructure changes envisaged in the Home Office's *ChangeUp* plans.
- The need for discussion with key local agencies, such as Birmingham Voluntary Service Council – also seeking to respond to the *ChangeUp* agenda – to clarify whether a more strategic relationship might be developed which could help secure the Trust's place in the wider voluntary and community sector support infrastructure.
- The Learning & Skills Council's progress towards developing a network of local 'development agencies': how well this is working and its implications for the Trust.
- And the shift in operating practices amongst the majority of key agencies and institutions to a **commissioning** rather than an open tendering (or project bidding) model for service delivery. Virtually all key agencies and devolved authorities are moving towards such a commissioning model and there is therefore a premium on strategic partnerships with these 'top tier' agencies and those operating at the

next tier down to whom they will turn in order to develop comprehensive delivery 'deals'.

These wider structural changes have grave implications for the Trust. Historically, it has found it very difficult to devote the necessary time and effort to developing its strategic relationships and may find itself almost wholly marginalised unless it can do so in the future. This issue is considered in more detail in sections 4.0 and 5.0.

### 3.0 THE REVIEW FINDINGS

This section contains key findings from the questionnaire survey, the interviews with programme officers and community representatives and the focus groups held with VCOs that were beneficiaries of one or more programmes of assistance.

Before we move on to examine these findings in detail it is useful to say something about the *profile* of the VCOs assisted by the Trust during 2001-04.

#### 3.1 Profile of Groups Assisted

Of the total **201** groups supported:

- **64%** were BME groups (i.e. have more than 50% of the members of their management committees drawn from BME communities).
- The average number of paid full-time staff was 2 and the average number of part-time paid staff 1.
- Using SRB definitions, **46%** were community organisations and **54%** voluntary organisations.
- **41%** were legally registered (charity, company limited by guarantee etc) and the rest unincorporated.
- The average annual turnover was **£58.8K**.
- Services provided by the groups range right across the spectrum but the most frequent were: health and social welfare (37%); advice and advocacy (21%); followed by neighbourhood/resident services (community centres, resident groups etc), arts, culture and recreation, and education.
- 24% of VCOs supported were BME organisations set up specifically to assist a particular community. Other specific beneficiary groups were: disability (14%); children and families (12%); young people (11%); refugees/asylum-seekers (6%), and the over-50s and women. 17% of groups assisted served no specific community or had mixed usage.

It should be emphasised, then, that the benefits of the Trust's work are felt most by the very groups that most need support – groups that are predominantly:

- BME-led.
- Small, with a turnover of less than £60K per year and fewer than three paid staff.
- Unincorporated associations, heavily dependent on volunteer effort rather than paid staff, with many **receiving assistance for the very first time**.
- Involved in the direct provision of community-based services in health and social welfare, advice, neighbourhood services, recreation, and education.

### **3.2 Key Findings from the Questionnaire Survey**

The key data is summarised on the following four pages under four broad headings:

- The impact and outcomes of small grants provision.
- The quality of the development support and assistance provided.
- Additional funding secured or levered-in by groups assisted.
- And whether this support has made a permanent difference to groups' confidence, skills and capacity.

The base from which all responses percentages are calculated is 77 completed questionnaires from a mailing of 150 – a response rate of just over 51.3%.

## **1: THE IMPACT & OUTCOMES OF SMALL GRANTS PROVISION**

Over **92%** of groups confirmed that grant support accessed via the Trust had made it possible for them to utilise professional services *which they could not otherwise have afforded*.

The small grants provided helped:

- Over **54%** of VCOs to develop *improved project management skills*.
- Over **54%** to *improve the services they offer to clients*.

There is less impact in the areas of increasing direct employment amongst VCOs or increased employment opportunities for client groups, however. Only **14.3%** said the assistance provided helped them increase the number of staff they employ (almost **13%** specifically said it did not); and **15.6%** said it helped them increase the employment opportunities on offer to their client groups (just under **12%** said it did not). **36%** experienced other positive outcomes for their organisations.

### ***Training & development grants***

There was a fairly even spread of responses across the range of possible organisational outcomes, with key gains being in the areas of Management Committee effectiveness and skills, better planning, the adoption of more effective constitutional and/or legal frameworks and better partnership working. The training and development grants provided helped:

- Over **44%** of VCOs to plan more effectively for the future by adopting a strategic, development or business plan.
- **34%** to better understand the roles and responsibilities of the Management Committee.
- **29%** to develop more effective partnership working relationships.
- Over **27%** to adopt the right Constitution or legal framework.
- **24%** to adopt a training plan for the Management Committee.
- **20%** to adopt a staff and/or volunteers' training plan.
- And almost **17%** to adopt various kinds of quality systems.

### ***Building-related***

This applied to only about half of respondents and as a consequence the volume of individual responses against specific outcomes is perhaps too low to draw general conclusions from, but almost **20%** said that their building-related feasibility helped them "make the right decision" and almost **16%** said it resulted in a "realistic and practicable solution".

### ***Quality and usefulness of funded work/activities***

The quality and usefulness of the training and development work funded via small grants was also ranked highly. Over **57%** of respondents scored this assistance at between '5' and '10' ('1' = 'very little use'; '10' = 'extensive/repeated use').

And **22%** of respondents scored the building-related work at between '7' and '10' (scoring attributions were the same).

## **2: QUALITY OF THE DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE PROVIDED**

These questions related to the quality of the development support directly provided by the Trust via the Development Worker operating in the field.

- While **22%** of respondents said they could have successfully engaged their consultant/specialist without the help of the development worker, **62%** said they could **not**.
- Over **84%** said the help provided enabled them to develop a clearer understanding of the project and its direction.
- **81%** said the help provided demonstrated a clear understanding of their circumstances and needs.
- **62%** said the development worker provided other relevant signposting and referral information.
- Almost **43%** say the assistance helped them complete other funding bids/applications (just over **23%** said it did **not**).

### ***Quality/usefulness of support from development worker***

Groups were asked to score the quality and effectiveness of the development worker support provided, marking it from 1 to 10 (with 1 = 'very little use' and 10 = 'very useful/effective').

- Over **81%** ranked it at between 5 and 10.
- Only **7%** of respondents scored this support at less than 5.
- This form of face-to-face assistance was rated very highly by groups both in the scoring and in the narrative responses elsewhere in the survey.

### **3: ADDITIONAL FUNDING SECURED OR LEVERED-IN BY GROUPS ASSISTED**

In past reviews the additional funding secured or levered-in by VCOs assisted has turned out to be a critical indicator of the success of the Trust's interventions. It is no less the case during the period 2001—04.

The survey reveals that:

- Over **one-third** of the VCOs assisted subsequently made successful funding bids elsewhere, securing additional funds from over **40** different funders.
- **27** organisations secured over **£1.95m** in additional funds.
- There is also further evidence from groups who did not respond to this survey but made previous declarations to the Trust that at least another £716,000 was secured or levered-in by VCOs assisted during the period. **This suggests that the overall total exceeds £2.6m and may in fact be higher even than this.**
- The majority of respondents cited multiple instances of securing additional funding – some up to six instances.
- The funding secured and/or levered-in ranged from under £1K to over £218K and from cumulatively from modest increments of £5,000 awarded two or three times to almost £500,000.

#### ***Funding ratios***

The Trust dispersed **£634,867** directly to VCOs. Roughly one-third of groups assisted raised a total of **£1,951,442.00** from other sources – a leverage ratio of **1:3.07**. For every pound that the Trust dispersed to groups, they raised over three pounds.

**If the other sums raised by groups which did not respond to the survey are included, the leverage ratio is more like 1:4.**

#### 4: A PERMANENT DIFFERENCE?

We asked whether the assistance provided via the Trust had made a significant difference to organisations' capacity and development.

- Almost **78%** of respondents said the Trust's support had brought about a significant improvement in their organisation's skills, capacity and confidence.
- We asked whether groups considered this to be a **permanent improvement** and **69%** said they did.

The narrative answers elsewhere in the survey were also overwhelmingly positive – even from organisations that perhaps made less subsequent progress than they had hoped.

There is a high level of satisfaction with the quality and attitudes of individual consultants carrying out work for the groups concerned and a significant number of organisations confirm that the Trust's support made a vital difference to them at a *time when no one else was able to help*.

#### 3.2.1 Summary

The research therefore demonstrates a number of fundamentally important outcomes of the Trust's work:

- a) 92% of those supported confirmed that the support provided via the Trust had enabled them to access professional services *which they could not otherwise have afforded*.
- b) Over 54% of VCOs say the assistance helped them to improve their project management skills and the services they provide to clients.
- c) 62% said that the help provided by the Digbeth Trust's development worker was instrumental in their successful commissioning of consultancy support.
- d) 84% have gained a better understanding of their project and its future direction.
- e) 43% said the assistance helped them complete other funding bids or applications and one-third subsequently made successful funding applications – *in which they felt the Trust's support played a direct part* – raising over **£1.95m** from over 40 different funders. For every £1 the Trust

spent supporting VCOs, groups raised over £3.

- f) Over three-quarters of groups assisted say the help brought about a significant improvement in their skills, capacity and confidence and 69% said this was a permanent improvement.

### **3.3 Key Findings from the Interviews**

#### **(i) Programme Officers and Community Representatives**

For the sake of brevity, key messages rather than verbatim interviews are presented here.

The general feedback from managers and community representatives of the programmes within which the Trust has worked was overwhelmingly positive. In every interview, the Trust's professionalism and commitment, and especially the fairness and transparency it brought to grants management, were praised. Of particular value to programme managers was the Trust's ability to help deliver challenging programme outputs, especially where these involved hard-to-reach and other disadvantaged and excluded groups. Where problems were identified, they were invariably bigger structural or process issues over which the Trust did not have responsibility or control.

Typically, programme managers said:

*"The Trust provided an exemplary service."*

*"I knew the process was in safe hands – the Trust's abilities and expertise were never in question."*

*"The Trust achieved outcomes that we knew we could not achieve unassisted."*

For ease of reference, the key messages are drawn together below under 'positives' and 'negatives'.

#### **Positives:**

- a) Several interviewees noted that the Trust's access to a pool of appropriately skilled external specialists and consultants – while perhaps requiring more demanding management and quality assurance arrangements – enables it to handle a greater volume of work and assist groups in far greater numbers than would be possible if it was reliant solely on a small team of in-house development workers.
- b) Programme managers also recognise that the Trust can offer a reduction in costs. One interviewee noted that external consultants will work more

cheaply for the Trust – a voluntary sector organisation – than they will when contracted directly by, say, a local authority.

- c) Several programme managers noted that under the Trust's management, grant applications were higher, with a better representation from amongst BME communities and other excluded groups, than would have been the case had they attempted to manage the process themselves. It is widely acknowledged that the Trust has the skills, expertise and experience to deliver effectively managed small grant distribution and to ensure better outcomes for groups assisted.
- d) All programme managers and community representatives interviewed praised the transparency and fairness of grant-making under the Trust's management and drew attention to the Trust's ability to work with and develop decision-making structures that include strong community representation. This is felt to offer an inclusive 'win-win' situation in which community knowledge is utilised while at the same time reassuring community participants that resources actually are reaching the groups most in need.

### **Negatives:**

While some more negative feedback was received, this generally speaking had more to do with the overall programme *structures* and *processes* within which the Trust had to work rather than the Trust's organisational performance. Nonetheless, there are some important points here:

- a) The Trust's work for third-party funders and programmes is not autonomous or independent. In these situations it is delivering a pre-determined service (even if in some cases it may have had a hand in designing the service) and the effectiveness of the grant distribution will invariably depend to a large degree on the robustness of the other structures and processes established within the programme. The Trust needs to give some thought to **how it might be perceived by local groups, especially in circumstances where its own performance may be compromised by other structural or process problems in the overall operation of the programme concerned.**
- b) A key message from programme managers is that small grants support must be more effectively integrated into whatever other VCS support their programmes offer. For example, where other funds for VCOs have been established within programmes, there are monitoring processes are required to ensure that the developmental progress of groups and their ability to access these other resources can be tracked.
- c) One programme received some complaints – probably no more than single figures – that grant applications were not being handled swiftly enough. Applicants were not aware that the capacity the Trust can devote to its work in any individual programme is determined by the fees it

receives and the worker-time funded. This raises the issue not just of how the Trust's performance can be compromised by circumstances beyond its control, but also of the negative perceptions this may cause amongst local VCOs.

- d) Two programme officers queried the length of time it takes for some grants to be spent in their entirety. While recognising that the outcome for the groups assisted is the key measure, both took the view that in at least some cases there was an argument for pushing commissioned consultancy support along a bit faster.

### **Summary – Programme Officers and Community Representatives**

Programme officers and community representatives alike, then, testify to the Trust's professionalism, experience and expertise. Programme managers especially acknowledge that the Trust has experience and expertise of a kind that is not readily found in the vast majority of regeneration programmes.

The general message seems to be that Trust does a demanding job – often in challenging circumstances – and one that most programmes could not achieve in other ways. But most of all, programme officers respect the Trust's ability to meet output targets – its ability to *deliver*.

**But this is not to say that the Trust does not face competition. It does. Having adopted what might be described as a 'social enterprise' income-generating model for its operation – selling a niche service under contract – the Trust has been instrumental in demonstrating that such a marketplace exists and as a consequence other providers are seeking to enter it, in some cases lobbying for services to be met by local organisations rather than an 'outside' provider like the Trust.**

One programme officer questioned whether an almost complete reliance on small grants distribution was necessarily the best way *in all cases* to support the VCS. This is an important issue and is discussed elsewhere in this report.

### **(ii) Voluntary & Community Organisations**

We can perhaps give a better flavour of what VCOs themselves are saying about the Trust's 'grants plus support' model of assistance by looking at some of the narrative answers given in the survey. The message is loud and clear:

- Access to small grants and the 'buying in' of professional consultancy support has been of help to groups **at a relatively early stage of their development when they were finding it difficult to access help from other sources.**

- Many groups find that the process of working with a professional consultant is one that transfers skills and builds confidence.
- Small grants plus professional assistance can in some cases make significant and long-term differences to the capacity and long-term sustainability of an organisation.

Some of the comments made by VCOs themselves in answer to survey questions convey a better picture of what this support has meant for groups:

- “Our original feasibility study in 1999 was used in 2004 to support our bid for Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Sports England funding. We have secured (subject to conditions) £218,252 for our capital costs towards a mothers’ centre!”
- “It enabled the group to gain a sense of direction and be sure about what it could and could not do.”
- “As this is an entirely new project, the fund helped us to put our vision more clearly, elect a management committee and draw up a constitution.”
- “Gave us a clearer understanding of the client group and therefore improved planning.”
- “[Helped us to identify] the specific needs of Yemeni women.”
- “Apply (successfully) for our first large grant (Community Fund Medium Grant Scheme).”
- “The grant enabled our group to employ a consultant to so architectural feasibility study on a proposed community project.”
- “We were able to obtain office again.”
- “[Helped in the] restructuring of our organisation.”
- “It took some time to realise that our support worker was going to help us to do something – not do it for us – but once we understood this, it was all good.”
- “Both the programmes were essential and an intrinsic element for [our organisation’s] development. It has given [us] a strategic direction and a forward integration. We have received £147,000 in funds and acquired Investors in People. I would to thank [the Trust] for its immense support and confidence without which none of the current positive elements could have been achieved.”

- “If it wasn’t for your organisation we would not be here today. The support from staff and dedication is extremely excellent.”
- “...You were the first organisation that helped us when no one else would.”
- “The organisational review resulted in the resignation of the old management committee and a new pro-active committee elected. We also relocated the organisation to a more accessible, user-friendly site. The business plan has allowed us to plan the way forward for the organisation.”

There are, in addition, three case studies of beneficiary VCOs contained in **Appendix 3**. These give a fuller picture of what small grants-based interventions have enabled VCOs to achieve and their experience of this process.

### ***Summary – Voluntary & Community Organisations***

While it is evident that practical face-to-face assistance is what VCOs most want and most value – and, it can be argued, what produces the most robust outcomes – there are some operational lessons that need to be taken on-board.

- a) Some groups, for example, report that the time allowed for their training, support or other consultancy services was inadequate, or that they needed further but perhaps less intensively provided assistance beyond the duration of the grant-paid consultancy. **This need for practical, follow-on assistance is vitally important and the inability, by and large, to accommodate this need under the funding regimes of third party programmes is a limitation that the Trust acknowledges must be overcome.**
- b) While some VCOs *have* received continuing assistance, this has frequently been dependent on informal goodwill arrangements with the consultants concerned. These informal arrangements have clearly worked incredibly well for the groups lucky enough to be part of them, but cannot be said to offer a **co-ordinated, consistent support environment for all VCOs**. They can also lead to misunderstandings regarding what can legitimately be expected under the terms of consultancy contracts established through the Trust. It must also be said that informal arrangements are open to abuse. While there is no widespread evidence that individual consultants have used such arrangements as a means of ‘drumming up’ work to their own advantage, one programme officer did raise this as a concern.

**One of the very real shortcomings, then, of a VCS support and assistance model based on the availability and criteria of third party grant regimes, is that generally it lacks the flexibility to offer a range of support 'products' capable of meeting the widest diversity of need. The third case study in appendix 3, of the AEKTA project, very much reinforces this message.**

## 4.0 CONCLUSIONS – IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TRUST AND ITS FUTURE OPERATION

The overall picture is complex. There are a significant number of factors to be taken into consideration and some of these may well conflict. It may therefore be simpler to consider these implications and draw conclusions under three headings:

- Voluntary and community organisations
- Funders
- The Trust

### 4.1 Implications for Voluntary & Community Organisations

This review – as with earlier reviews – demonstrates a high level of satisfaction with the Trust's management and administration of third party grants funds and this is true whether one is looking at the feedback from programme managers, from community representatives or from VCOs themselves. During 2001-04, through its involvement in a range of funders' programmes, the Trust brought almost £640K into the voluntary and community sector – much of this distributed directly to the groups that most need resources – enabling groups to access professional assistance of a calibre they would otherwise have been unable to afford. This delivered support to over 200 groups. Using skills gained during the process of working with specialists and consultants, about one-third of groups assisted subsequently raised almost £2m from other funding sources.

For the groups for whom this 'grants plus support' model is appropriate, then, it works in a frequently exemplary fashion. But the research also demonstrates **that it is not able to meet the full diversity of VCS need, nor is it able to meet demand.** An examination of the Trust's data alone confirms this. In the period 2001-04, the Trust received 321 enquiries from groups whose needs could not be immediately met. And during the 2003-04 financial year alone, in addition to its funded work, the Trust signposted a further 110 VCOs that could not for one reason or another be assisted under its funded programmes. Indeed, the Trust's waiting list – typically around a 150 groups at any one time – always outstrips supply. Similarly, in the first year of the SRB6 'North West Corridors of Regeneration' programme, 90 enquiries were received for 30 available grants. **Not only is the Trust juggling scarce resources, it is for the most part juggling scarce resources which have additional restrictions attached to them.**

The proportion of groups most evidently assisted by the present model of support is somewhere between one-third and one-half, suggesting that the 'grants plus support' model works particularly well for groups that are at a certain stage in their developmental life. The Trust believes that this may be VCOs that are in transition from being largely volunteer-dependent community groups to more professionalised voluntary organisations with paid staff, better

developed internal procedures and processes and an increasing ability and capacity to handle publicly funded delivery contracts. The groups for whom this approach works less well are those whose developmental needs demand a more flexible, more responsive, more 'customisable' approach, and **especially those for whom practical, follow-on support may be of central importance in enabling subsequent implementation of their feasibility studies, business or organisational development plans or other strategies.**

## 4.2 Implications for Funders

For funders, a slightly different set of issues is involved. While no one would want to see area-based programmes ignoring support for the voluntary and community sector, there is a real concern that geographically restricted, time-limited programmes, with their attendant output-driven processes, are unable to produce a sufficiently flexible model of assistance for VCOs.

And further, because programme-specific measures of support for the sector are rarely if ever integrated into the wider voluntary sector support infrastructure, they can serve to make the support environment more confusing, more fragmented and certainly more confusing for potential service-users. **This is central to understanding the *limitations* of third party small grants-based interventions: such programmes – valuable as they and their resources demonstrably are – create a patchwork of support and assistance, but not a flexible, customisable, consistently accessible service.**

In fact, even *within* some programmes, there is evidence to suggest that various strands of voluntary sector support are inadequately co-ordinated and insufficiently integrated into the programme as a whole.

Indeed, on a broader note, there is widespread evidence across a whole range of what previously would have been 'core funded' support services that the pressure to find resources for these services from programme budgets (such as SRB) rather than main spend has in many cases accelerated a process of fragmentation, leading to a disjointed and confusing service environment.

While small grants – administered and managed effectively, as this research demonstrates – can produce real, tangible benefits for the VCOs that are their beneficiaries, they are a relatively costly way of distributing what are often fairly limited resources. So, even for funders, there is also an argument for finding less costly and less administratively burdensome ways of getting resources into the sector.

Most pressing, however, is the frequently observed failure of area-based programmes to make possible further practical, follow-on support for VCOs when there is often clearly a need for this, along with flexible and adaptable

support measures capable of helping the widest diversity of groups meet very different developmental needs.

### 4.3 Implications for The Digbeth Trust

**First, let us acknowledge that without its successful entry into the marketplace for grants management services over the past five or six years, the Trust would not now be here.** As a method of operating, the Trust's grants management for third parties has:

- Brought additional resources into the sector.
- Made it possible for the Trust to continue pursuing its mission, producing significant results *for those VCOs for which this particular model of assistance is most appropriate.*
- And has been key to the income-generation that has in recent years ensured the Trust's survival.

The prospect, then, of completely abandoning this element of the Trust's work, cannot be immediately contemplated. The Trust needs to do this in order to survive and it might also be argued that VCOs too need the Trust to continue bringing its expertise and experience to bear on third party programmes in order that they may derive the maximum benefit from them. **But there is a growing concern, both amongst staff and Trustees, that third party small grants regimes should not be the only or main determinant of how the Trust offers support and other development services to the VCS. The pendulum has swung too far in one direction at present.**

However, there are other factors too that the Trust must take into consideration. We have already covered some of them:

- The inflexibility of third-party grants and their failure to make possible practical, follow-on support where this may be required.
- Their geographically restricted, time-limited nature.
- Their isolation from wider voluntary sector infrastructure support measures.
- Their failure to provide a consistent, widely understood and uniformly accessible support environment for VCOs.

**Added to these must be a more pressing concern for the Trust and that is the Trust's positioning in what may well be a declining marketplace for grants management services.** For example, there is an increasing tendency amongst major institutional players, such as the LSC, GOWM, and

the PCTs, to adopt a **commissioning** rather than project bidding approach to their service delivery. This may mean that in the medium-term opportunities to market the kind of services the Trust provides to funders will shrink rather than expand, as funds are conflated into 'single pots' and major institutions strike larger and more comprehensive delivery 'deals' with preferred strategic partners, 'commissioning' them to undertake comprehensive service delivery packages, rather than inviting small-scale project bidding. **In such an environment, the Trust would be seriously disadvantaged in the absence of a secure strategic relationship with a bigger player who could ensure its inclusion in a range of delivery arrangements.**

But there is also another problem. The Trust's emphasis on third party grants management services may have served to detach it from – or at the very least, send out a message that it is detached from – wider voluntary sector debates regarding infrastructure support and the 'reconfiguration' envisaged in the Home Office's *ChangeUp* plans. The Trust has to play a more prominent part in these debates if it seriously wants to secure a long-term future in voluntary and community sector support. However, the Trust's particular expertise and experience in working to support and develop grassroots groups is not being considered – perhaps not even heard – in the present debates that are shaping the future of the voluntary sector support infrastructure. **In some cases, the Trust has yet to make a convincing case to policy-makers about where it fits in the voluntary sector support infrastructure.**

The issue of cost and workloads has already been touched on but is of consequence to the Trust too. Compared to the relatively modest sums involved in most small grants (under £3K), their management and administration is disproportionately costly and labour-intensive. The Trust urgently needs an additional but more flexible support programme **not linked to grant-making** which enables VCO development and support needs to be met in whatever seems the most responsive and appropriate way. This would definitely include practical, follow-on support. It must also be said that the level of income it can earn from grants management has so far proven insufficient to enable the Trust to increase its staffing or capacity in any consistent fashion.

**The key difficulty for the Trust, then, is that any solutions it seeks to implement to its present problems must meet not just the developmental needs of the widest range of VCOs but also the identified priorities of potential funders and purchasers. In doing this, the Trust needs to be very clear, spelling out that there is nothing wrong with what it does and that the problem lies in the mechanisms it has had to adopt in order to try and meet VCO support needs.**

**These are complex but hopefully not insoluble problems and now – in the context of wider changes that are taking place in the voluntary sector support environment – is the right time to try and tackle them.**

## 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research, and the conclusions reached in the preceding section, suggest that as a matter of priority, the Trust should be seeking to address four things:

- 1) First, it should be examining ways in which it can fund a developmental resource which is not programme-dependent – i.e. does not have as its first and only purpose access to small grants from a particular programme – and which can be used much more along the lines of an **operational budget** aimed at meeting a wide variety of VCS organisational development needs **by whatever seems the most appropriate methods for the groups concerned.**

This should definitely include the potential for **practical, follow-on assistance to build on, consolidate and assist in the implementation of earlier organisational development strategies that have been funded via small grants interventions, thus protecting and making best use of the earlier investment and meeting an identified need expressed by many VCOs.**

- 2) Second, this needs to be done in the wider context of the Government's review of voluntary sector infrastructure – now rebranded *ChangeUp*. It is vital that the Trust also asserts itself in this crucial debate. While the sector's involvement in *ChangeUp* seems at present to be expressed at a mainly regional level, the Trust should be actively involved in anticipation of a more local infrastructure plan being developed and resourced. There is a regional *ChangeUp* strategy group facilitated by RAWM and GOWM and if it isn't too late the Trust should be actively lobbying for a place within this group in order both to bring its own experience and expertise to the table and to assist in its own repositioning in the wider VCS support environment.
- 3) Allied to the point above, in considering any repositioning, the Trust should also be examining its **strategic relationships** – especially the need to work closely with a strategic partner that can *automatically seek to include the Trust* as a delivery agent. **This review has identified that – certainly as far as the immediate future is concerned – Birmingham Voluntary Service Council is the most likely strategic partner, and probably also the one with its own compelling reasons for pursuing such a relationship.**
- 4) As regards the Trust's continuing delivery of grants management and administration services for third party funders – certainly if these services are to continue as a key means of the Trust fulfilling its mission – one other point should be made. It is, as things stand, *virtually impossible to describe what the Trust does to those who don't already know* and a means of 'segmenting' the Trust's service descriptions urgently needs to be found so that:

- It is evident that the Trust is **not** a grant-making 'Trust' per se.
- That grants management, administration and distribution is a fee-earning service based on specialist expertise and experience that it offers as a service to third party funders.
- And there is a clear distinction between the income-generating services it offers to other professional sectors and the services VCOs can anticipate the Trust providing.

## 5.1 Concluding Remarks

The Trust has the necessary ammunition to mount these arguments, but whether it has the capacity required to effect such a fundamental repositioning in the 'marketplace' is another matter. It is beyond the remit of this review to provide a single definitive answer, but nonetheless the following observations should be made:

- Four successive reviews – each highly positive – while strengthening the evidence for the effectiveness of what the Trust does, have not enabled it to reposition itself more securely in the wider voluntary sector support environment, build its internal capacity, or regain any of the 'independence' and flexibility that ICPP funding arrangements offered throughout the 1990s.
- There is a persisting low awareness and understanding of what the Trust is, what it does, for whom and how. While perhaps an inevitable consequence of the operating methods the Trust has had to adopt over recent years, the obstacle that this presents to building a better profile and to gaining more widespread recognition for its work in the sector cannot be over-stated.
- There must also be a question mark over the Trust's ability to strike beneficial operating arrangements with other strategic partners: there seems to be a widespread view in the sector that the Trust is 'not in the loop'.
- And finally, there is the issue of the Digbeth Trust 'brand'. Some serious thought needs to be given to whether the name now adequately or accurately describes what the Trust does, to whether it carries with it too much misleading historical baggage, and to whether *on balance* giving up this established name would be a positive or a negative course of action. These are not decisions to be taken lightly and need to be looked at alongside other key factors, such as what space is left in the development and support marketplace by the LSC-

funded development agencies, the key policy priorities of institutional funders, such as GOWM, and how the Trust moves to best position itself in what is a rapidly changing sector.

Third Sector Services  
November 2004  
[Final version/2.1]

# Appendix

# Appendix 1

## The Questionnaire

For office use:

# THE DIGBETH TRUST LTD QUESTIONNAIRE

## IMPACT OF DIGBETH TRUST SUPPORT TO VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY GROUPS

### Purpose of this Questionnaire

As the covering letter explains, your organisation received development support and/or small grant funding through the Digbeth Trust sometime during the period 2001–04. Third Sector Services have been asked to carry out a survey to find out the *benefits* that your organisation gained from this assistance – what has been successful, what worked, what didn't work so well and what difficulties, if any, you experienced.

**Section 1** in this survey questionnaire asks about the benefits you gained from any small grant funding received through the Digbeth Trust. **Section 2** concerns the benefits you gained from the Digbeth Trust development worker support and other assistance provided. **Section 3** is about any additional finance you were able to access or 'lever in' as a direct result of this grant support and assistance. **Section 4** asks how far your organisation has 'travelled' – whether the Digbeth Trust support and assistance has made a permanent difference to the organisation.

**Please contact The Digbeth Trust on 0121 753 0706 or 0121 248 3323 if you have any questions about this exercise. We would be very grateful if you could return the completed questionnaire to the address on page 4 by FRIDAY 9 JULY 2004 at the latest.**

Name of your organisation:

### SECTION 1. THE SMALL GRANT FUNDING YOU RECEIVED

You need only complete Section 1 if your organisation received a small grant or grants through the Digbeth Trust (the covering letter provides details of all grants and other assistance given).

If Section 1 is not applicable please tick here and go to Section 2: Not applicable

**Q1. Did your grant/s fund work that your organisation could otherwise not have afforded?**

*[Please indicate 'yes' or 'no']*

Yes  No

**Q2. What was the impact of the funding you received – did it enable your organisation to:**

*[Please tick the relevant box]*

a) Develop improved project management skills Yes  No  Not Applicable

b) Increase the number of staff you employ Yes  No  Not Applicable

c) Increase employment opportunities for the client groups you work with Yes  No  Not Applicable

d) Improve the services you offer to your client groups Yes  No  Not Applicable

e) Other *[please specify]*: .....  
.....  
.....

**Q3. If the small grant(s) was for training and development activities did it enable your organisation to achieve any of the following?**

*If Q3 is not applicable please tick here and go to Q4*

*[Tick as relevant]*

- a) Adopt the right Constitution or legal framework for your group
- b) Better understand the roles/responsibilities of the Management Committee
- c) Develop a training plan for the Management Committee
- d) Develop a training plan for staff
- e) Develop a training plan for volunteers
- f) Test the viability of a new product or service
- g) Plan more effectively for the future – adopt a development plan, strategic plan or business plan
- h) Implement new/better policies and procedures
- i) Adopt better employment practice
- j) Adopt better volunteer practice
- k) Gain or implement a quality standard or system
- l) Improve financial management skills – setting budgets, cash flows etc.
- m) Develop more effective working relationships with other organisations - e.g. partners, agencies, networks etc.

Other.....

**Q4. If the small grant(s) was for a building-related feasibility study did this funding:**

*If Q4 is not applicable please tick here and go to Q5*

*[Tick as relevant]*

- a) Enable you to examine premises options and make the right decision Yes  No
- b) Result in a realistic and practicable solution Yes  No

**If yes, did it enable you to**

*[Tick as relevant]*

- c) Extend or refurbish premises successfully
- d) Acquire premises
- e) Improve disability access or other general access
- f) Relocate to new premises
- g) Share
- h) Take some other action   
(if so, what .....)

**If not, what happened?**.....  
.....

**Q5. How would you rate the quality and usefulness of the funded work and activities at questions 3 and 4 above (as applicable)? Please indicate with a tick against a number in the range 1-10, where 1 is 'very little use' and 10 is 'extensive/repeated use'.**

	very little use						extensive/repeated use			
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Q3: Training &amp; development</b>										
<b>Q4: Buildings-related</b>										

## SECTION 2: SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE RECEIVED

**Q6.** The Digbeth Trust sent a development support worker to assist you with a small grants application and/or work directly with you (the covering letter with this questionnaire will list details of any grant or assistance received). Please comment on the following:

*[Please tick the relevant box]*

- a) If you engaged a consultant or other specialist, could you have done this without the help of the support worker? Yes  No  Not Applicable
- b) Did the help provided enable you to develop a clearer understanding of what you wanted your project to do? Yes  No  Not Applicable
- c) Did the help provided demonstrate a clear understanding of your circumstances and needs? Yes  No  Not Applicable
- d) Did the support worker give you other relevant advice or help e.g. referral to other sources of support? Yes  No  Not Applicable
- e) Did the help provided enable you to successfully complete other funding bids or applications? Yes  No  Not Applicable

**Q7.** How would you rate the quality and usefulness of the support from the Digbeth Trust development worker? Please indicate with a tick against a number in the range 1-10, where 1 is 'very little use' and 10 is 'very useful/effective'.

Rating	very little use					very useful/effective				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
DT development worker										

## SECTION 3: ADDITIONAL FUNDING ACCESSED OR 'LEVERED IN' AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE SMALL GRANT SUPPORT & ASSISTANCE

**Q8.** In the table below please give as much detail as possible about additional funding which the small grant(s) and/or assistance received from the Digbeth Trust enabled you to get.

Source of funding	Amount of additional funding	How much was for capital items	How much was for revenue items	What funding was used for
1.	£	£	£	
2.	£	£	£	
3.	£	£	£	
4.	£	£	£	
5.	£	£	£	
6.	£	£	£	
<b>Totals of funding</b>	£	£	£	

**SECTION 4: HOW FAR HAS YOUR ORGANISATION 'TRAVELLED'?**

**Q9. The aim of the small grant programmes and/or direct development support for the voluntary and community sector is, if at all possible, to make a *permanent* difference to the organisations they assist. Do you feel that grant(s) and/or assistance you have received have:**

*[Tick as relevant]*

- a) Brought about a significant improvement in the skills, capacity and confidence of your organisation? Yes  No
- b) If you have answered 'yes' to the above, do you consider this to be a *permanent* improvement? Yes  No

**Q10. Do you have any further comments you would like to add?**

Further comments:

Name of person completing this questionnaire: .....

Position in the Organisation: .....

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Your responses will be treated confidentially and data will be anonymously summarised within the context of final evaluation reports.

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**Please return your completed questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope provided by no later than FRIDAY 9 JULY 2004, to:**

Alun Severn, Third Sector Services  
c/o The Digbeth Trust  
Unit 321 The Custard Factory  
Gibb Street, Digbeth  
Birmingham B9 4AA.

Telephone: 0121 753 0706  
Telephone/Fax: 0121 248 3323  
Email: digbeth\_trust@hotmail.com

***Thank you for participating in this survey.***

**June 2004**

## **Appendix 2**

### **The Survey: Key Findings & Summary of Data**

## Digbeth Trust: Review of Activities 2001–2004 Key Facts & Overview

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For ease of reference, these brief summaries correspond to the numbering of the questions in the questionnaire form.

145 questionnaires were sent out; 77 completed questionnaires were returned = a response rate of 53.12%.

### Section 1

- 1. Access to professional services which would otherwise be unaffordable:** Over 92% of groups confirm that grant support accessed via DT made it possible for them to utilise professional services *which they could not otherwise have afforded*.
- 2. Impact of funding received:**
  - Over 54% say it helped them develop *improved project management skills*.
  - Over 54% say it helped them *improve the services they offer to clients*.
  - There is less impact in the areas of increasing direct employment amongst VCOs or increased employment opportunities for client groups, however. Only 14.3% say it helped them increase the number of staff they employ (with almost 13% specifically stating that it did not); and 15.6% say it helped them increase employment opportunities on offer to their client groups (with just under 12% specifically stating it did not).
  - Interestingly, 28 respondents (36%) state that there were other positive outcomes for their organisations.
- 3. Training & development grants:** There is a fairly even spread of responses across the range of possible organisational outcomes, but the key outcomes seem to be in the areas of Management Committee effectiveness/skills, better planning, Constitutional/legal frameworks and partnership working:
  - While only 14% say that small grant support enabled them to “test the viability of a new service or product” or “adopt better employment practice”, over 44% say the support enabled them to “plan more effectively for the future by adopting a strategic, development or business plan”.
  - Just over 27% say the support helped them adopt the right Constitution or legal framework; over 34% say it helped them better understand the roles and responsibilities of the Management Committee; 24% say it helped them adopt a training plan for the Management Committee; 20% say it helped them adopt a staff and/or volunteers’ training plan. Nearly 17% say it helped with quality assurance/quality systems. And nearly 29% say it helped them develop more effective partnership working relationships.
- 4. Building-related:** This applied to only about half of respondents and as a consequence the volume of individual responses against specific outcomes is perhaps too low to draw general conclusions from, but almost 20% say that their building-related feasibility helped them “make the right decision” and almost 16% say it resulted in a “realistic and practicable solution” (only 1.3% and 2.6% respectively say it did not).
- 5. Quality and usefulness of funded work/activities:** Over 57% of respondents ranked the training and development work funded at between ‘5’ and ‘10’ (where ‘1’ is of ‘very little use’ and ‘10’ is of ‘extensive/repeated use’). Only 3 respondents (less

than 4%) ranked it below '5'. 22% of respondents ranked the building-related work at between '7' and '10', with only 1 respondent ranking it below '7'.

## Section 2

6. **Development support and assistance:** Over 62% of respondents say they could **not** have successfully engaged their consultant/specialist without the help of the development worker; 22% say they could. Over 84% say the help provided enabled them to develop a clearer understanding of the project and its direction; slightly over 5% say it did **not**. 81% say the help provided demonstrated a clear understanding of their circumstances and needs; only 1 respondent says this was **not** the case. 62% say the development worker provided other relevant signposting and referral information; almost 13% say this was **not** the case. Almost 43% say the assistance helped them complete other funding bids/applications; just over 23% say it did **not**.
7. **Quality/usefulness of support from development worker:** Just over 7% of respondents (6 groups) ranked this support at under '5' – of limited or little use; but over 81% ranked it at between '5' and '10'. Indeed, 40% ranked it between '8' and '10'. Satisfaction with this form of assistance is high and is reinforced by the narrative responses elsewhere in the survey.

## Section 3

8. **Funding secured and/or levered in:** This is a crucial part of the survey and worth understanding in some detail:
  - Over one-third of respondents (27 groups) state that the assistance provided via the DT enabled them to subsequently make successful funding bids elsewhere, securing additional funds from over 40 different funders.
  - 27 organisations went on to secure over £1.95m in additional funds. About 40% of this was capital funding and about 60% revenue (this is extrapolated from partial answers and we don't have a 100% total).
  - Majority of respondents cite multiple instances of securing additional funding – some up to six instances.
  - Funding ranges from under £1K to over £218K and cumulatively from modest increments of £5K revenue funding awarded two or three times to around £0.5m.

## Section 4

9. **A permanent difference?** Almost 78% of respondents say the Trust's support has brought about a significant improvement in their organisation's skills, capacity and confidence; just over 10% say this has not proven to be the case. Almost 69% say they believe this to be a *permanent* improvement; and just under 8% say it isn't.
10. **Narrative remarks:** Overwhelmingly positive – even from organisations who perhaps made less subsequent progress than they had hoped. There seems to be a high level of satisfaction with the quality and attitudes of individual consultants. A significant number of organisations appear to acknowledge that the Trust's support made a vital difference to them at a *time when no one else was able to help*.

# THE DIGBETH TRUST LTD

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### RESPONSES – DATA SUMMARY

145 questionnaires sent out

77 completed responses received = 53.12% response rate

#### SECTION 1. THE SMALL GRANT FUNDING YOU RECEIVED

You need only complete Section 1 if your organisation received a small grant or grants through the Digbeth Trust (the covering letter provides details of all grants and other assistance given).

If Section 1 is not applicable please tick here and go to Section 2: **Not applicable 5 / 6.49%**

**Q1. Did your grant/s fund work that your organisation could otherwise not have afforded?**

*[Please indicate 'yes' or 'no']*

**Yes 71 / 92.21%** **No 1 / 1.3%**

**Q2. What was the impact of the funding you received – did it enable your organisation to:**

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
a) Develop improved project management skills	42/54.55%	1/1.30%	10/12.99%
b) Increase the number of staff you employ	11/14.29%	10/12.99%	22/28.57%
c) Increase employment opportunities for the client groups you work with	12/15.58%	9/11.69%	24/31.17%
d) Improve the services you offer to your client groups	42/54.55%	4/5.19%	10/12.99%

e) Other *[please specify]*: **See responses below:**

- Develop and improve skills of management committee
- Look at possible uses for our building
- Develop the capacity and empowerment of client group and organisations
- Expand the range of services we offer and increase our skill base
- Customer Care training focus services on client's needs staff more welcoming create user friendly atmosphere
- It enabled the group to gain a sense of direction and be sure about what it could and could not do
- To consider the future of the charity and to put together a business plan
- Consultancy and feasibility study to established a Bangladeshi Community Centre in Handsworth
- Helped to plan improvement/development of a community hall
- Evaluate the current position of the organisation and determine its future direction
- Organisational project structure
- As this is an entirely new project, the fund helped us to put our vision more clearly, elect a management committee and draw a constitution
- It helped the members to be able to update the organisation's website
- Our original feasibility study in 1999 was used in 2004 to support our bid to NRF and Sports Eng funding. We have secured (almost subject to conditions) £218,252 for our capital costs towards a mother's centre!
- Architectural feasibility done
- It has enabled us to work with youth groups in Nechells Community Centre and support workshop Priory Gate Community
- Identified the specific needs of Yemeni women
- Improve funding applications
- Gave us a clearer understanding about the client group and thus informed planning.
- Apply (successfully) for our first large grant (Community Fund Medium Grant Scheme)
- Assess whether the services and facility we have on offer are on interest to local community groups and to see if our location is prohibitive
- The grant enabled our group to employ a consultant to do architectural feasibility study on a proposed community project
- Development of a feasibility study on architectural revamp
- The grant enabled us to conduct a feasibility study of a former church hall to determine its adaptability for a community development project

- Work is still being carried out but so far we have completed application for charitable registration
- We were able to obtain offices again
- Staff development
- Restructuring of our organisation

**Q3. If the small grant(s) was for training and development activities did it enable your organisation to achieve any of the following?**

If Q3 is not applicable please tick here and go to Q4

Not applicable: 16/20.78%

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| a) Adopt the right Constitution or legal framework for your group   | 21/27.27% |
| b) Better understand the roles/responsibilities of the Management Committee                                       | 28/34.36% |
| c) Develop a training plan for the Management Committee   | 19/24.68% |
| d) Develop a training plan for staff  | 16/20.78% |
| e) Develop a training plan for volunteers   | 16/20.78% |
| f) Test the viability of a new product or service   | 11/14.29% |
| g) Plan more effectively for the future – adopt a development plan, strategic plan or business plan               | 34/44.16% |
| h) Implement new/better policies and procedures   | 21/27.27% |
| i) Adopt better employment practice   | 11/14.29% |
| j) Adopt better volunteer practice  | 16/20.78% |
| k) Gain or implement a quality standard or system   | 13/16.88% |
| l) Improve financial management skills – setting budgets, cash flows etc.   | 14/18.18% |
| m) Develop more effective working relationships with other organisations - e.g. partners, agencies, networks etc. | 22/28.57% |

Other: [See responses below:](#)

- Develop skills in fundraising
- Acquired 'TAG' award, quality assurance mark
- Gain skills in bid writing
- Consultation work ongoing
- Support community activities – after school
- To revise and review our activities, structures and practices to improvement and be aware to review on regular intervals
- Work in progress

**Q4. If the small grant(s) was for a building-related feasibility study did this funding:**

If Q4 is not applicable please tick here and go to Q5

Not applicable:

39/50.65%

- |   | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| a) Enable you to examine premises options and make the right decision | 15/19.48%  | 1/1.30%   |
| b) Result in a realistic and practicable solution                     | 12/15.58%  | 2/2.60%   |

**If yes, did it enable you to**

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| c) Extend or refurbish premises successfully         | 5/6.49%   |
| d) Acquire premises                                  | 3/3.90%   |
| e) Improve disability access or other general access | 1/1.30%   |
| f) Relocate to new premises                          | 1/1.30%   |
| g) Share   | 1/1.30%   |
| h) Take some other action                            | 11/14.29% |

[See responses below:](#)

- To accept the situation and improve/repair premises
- Gain Planning permission to install temporary building
- A report of feasibility study
- Future capital extension
- Wait until we find a suitable premises and funding stream before we were able to secure a centre. The study established the 'need' for a women's centre

- Some achievement done, some are pending
- The feasibility enabled project to put funding bid to lottery
- Focus on a long term sustained ??? in community premises
- Still in progress

**If not, what happened?**      **See responses below:**

- Feasibility implemented we needed to concentrate on strengthening the organisation current service first
- Research if there was a need
- Acquire some funding from LSC to build an extension and some refurbishment
- The architectural survey was fine. The immediate project floundered on lack of appropriate long term management arrangements see answer to Q10
- Still considering all the options

**Q5. How would you rate the quality and usefulness of the funded work and activities at questions 3 and 4 above (as applicable)? Please indicate with a tick against a number in the range 1-10, where 1 is 'very little use' and 10 is 'extensive/repeated use'.**

Rating	very little use					extensive/repeated use				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Q3: Training &amp; development</b>	2 2.6%	0 0%	0 0%	1 1.30%	8 10.39%	2 2.60%	9 11.69%	13 16.88%	3 3.90%	9 11.69%
<b>Q4: Buildings-related</b>	1 1.30%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 5.19%	6 7.99%	2 2.60%	5 6.49%

## SECTION 2: SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE RECEIVED

**Q6. The Digbeth Trust sent a development support worker to assist you with a small grants application and/or work directly with you (the covering letter with this questionnaire will list details of any grant or assistance received). Please comment on the following:**

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
a) If you engaged a consultant or other specialist, could you have done this without the help of the support worker?	17/22.08%	48/62.34%	8/10.39%
b) Did the help provided enable you to develop a clearer understanding of what you wanted your project to do?	65/84.42%	4/5.19%	3/3.90%
c) Did the help provided demonstrate a clear understanding of your circumstances and needs?	63/81.82%	1/1.30%	8/10.39%
d) Did the support worker give you other relevant advice or help e.g. referral to other sources of support?	48/62.34%	10/12.99%	12/15.58%
e) Did the help provided enable you to successfully complete other funding bids or applications?	33/42.68%	18/23.38%	18/23.39%

**Q7. How would you rate the quality and usefulness of the support from the Digbeth Trust development worker? Please indicate with a tick against a number in the range 1-10, where 1 is 'very little use' and 10 is 'very useful/effective'.**

Rating	very little use					very useful/effective				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
DT development worker	2 2.60%	0 0%	2 2.60%	2 2.60%	6 7.79%	6 7.79%	10 12.99%	9 11.69%	18 23.38%	14 18.18%

### SECTION 3: ADDITIONAL FUNDING ACCESSED OR 'LEVERED IN' AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE SMALL GRANT SUPPORT & ASSISTANCE

**Q8. In the table below please give as much detail as possible about additional funding which the small grant(s) and/or assistance received from the Digbeth Trust enabled you to get.**

Source of funding	Amount of additional funding	How much was for capital items	How much was for revenue items	What funding was used for
1.	£950,910	298,069	541,085	
2.	£299,844	£47,900	£239,634	
3.	£391,652	£358,252	£31,400	
4.	£252,721	£73,000	£173,721	
5.	£45,345	£000	£34,045	
6.	£10,970	£000	£3970	
<b>Totals of funding</b>	<b>£1,951,442</b>	<b>£777,221</b>	<b>£1,023,855</b>	

*NB: Capital and revenue do **not** add up to total – not all respondents completed all parts of table*

#### Variety of funding sources

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Access Committee for Birmingham     | 23. Job Centre Plus                       |
| 2. Arts Council                        | 24. Lankelly Trust                        |
| 3. Awards for All                      | 25. Lloyds TSB Foundation                 |
| 4. BCC Social Services                 | 26. Local Network Birmingham              |
| 5. Barrow Cadbury                      | 27. Lord Mayor of Birmingham              |
| 6. BCEN                                | 28. Lottery                               |
| 7. BCF                                 | 29. LSC                                   |
| 8. Business Link Birmingham & Solihull | 30. Montessori St Nicholas                |
| 9. Cadbury Trust                       | 31. New Deal                              |
| 10. William A Cadbury Trust            | 32. New Lacey Trust                       |
| 11. Church and Community               | 33. NRF                                   |
| 12. Comic Relief                       | 34. SBPCT                                 |
| 13. Community Champions                | 35. SRB4                                  |
| 14. Community Chest                    | 36. SRB5 (IH?)                            |
| 15. Community Fund                     | 37. SRB6                                  |
| 16. Connexions                         | 38. Sure Start Capital                    |
| 17. CPN (SRB6)                         | 39. Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council |
| 18. DOH                                | 40. Sports England                        |
| 19. ESF Global Grant                   | 41. Sure Start                            |
| 20. HART                               | 42. The Tudor Trust                       |
| 21. Home Office                        | 43. Woodview Women's Ass                  |
| 22. Home Office Connected Communities  |   |

### Scale of funding

- 27 organisations secured subsequent from over 40 different funders
- Majority of respondents cite multiple examples of funding secured – some up to **six** instances
- Funding ranges from £750—£218K in any one instance
- Cumulatively, ranges from modest increments of £5K secured three or four times to c.£0.5m

## SECTION 4: HOW FAR HAS YOUR ORGANISATION 'TRAVELLED'?

**Q9. The aim of the small grant programmes and/or direct development support for the voluntary and community sector is, if at all possible, to make a *permanent* difference to the organisations they assist. Do you feel that grant(s) and/or assistance you have received have:**

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
a) Brought about a significant improvement in the skills, capacity and confidence of your organisation?	60/77.92%	8/10.39%
b) If you have answered 'yes' to the above, do you consider this to be a <i>permanent</i> improvement?	53/68.83%	6/7.79%

**Q10. Do you have any further comments you would like to add?**

**This includes text answers from Q.10 and in some cases comments that were added in text elsewhere in the questionnaire response.**

- Relating to the question 9b – the permanent improvement is not possible simply because on every AGM there are new members elected to the Management Committee and they need some sort of training.
- Organisation now in a position for directors to read and become familiar with early written recommendation for implementing the way forward on the various projects currently undertaken
- Useful consultancy highlighted many issues
- The grant and study have allowed us to consider options that are not really viable. Our minds and understanding have been clarified as to our presence in an areas where regeneration is on the agenda
- A well and useful service to develop the capacity of community organisation
- The project boosted our confidence as an organisation and made us realise that we had potential and could achieve our vision
- Because we can't retain consultant/freelance to work for us forever and funding sources are becoming much more complex and time consuming.
- Volunteering has its limitation? Concern is 'governance' for free in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- BFC (Black Family Coalition) would like to thank the Digbeth Trust for the support we have received, the BFC hope that you may help us to secure funding for capital, namely a year or two running costs for a centre we aim to open by next year. If there is funding available please send us the appropriate forms
- It would be useful to have the funds to do follow up sessions to solidify on what was learnt. The time given to complete this task was too short.
- The grant we received was spent towards accessing the needs of refugee children and young people. Having successfully identified such needs, we were able in short period received grants meeting these needs and between 50-70 young people benefited. In addition to the grants/donations we received, the organisations public image improved. My experience in receiving help from Digbeth Trust goes back to 1990 when I worked with the Midland Refugee Council. The first feasibility funded by the Trust made a big change of image and MRC received first funding from the Home Office and city Council so that experience enabled NHP made full use to leverage funding and PR.
- We were well served by the consultant. Her report has proved very significant in visiting the group in a common purpose(s) and providing a way forward. Her manner and demeanour throughout was very much appreciate
- Receiving the help, assisted us in putting our charity on a firmer financial basis (hopefully our funding will be on going for a while). I also think it improved our status in they eyes of the organisations for who we work

- It took some time to realise that our support worker was going to help us do something – not do it for us – but once we understood this, it was all good.
- The training was very short (5 days) more needed to be done which was not completed or needed further exercise. The most important outcome was the good relationship the organisation enjoyed with the consultant after the training which means that the organisation could seek and get non-formal training and assistance from the consultant.
- It was very helpful step formal within a much larger project. The grant has been significant in helping us in the short and medium term development of our property. The development worker was able to understand our situation quickly and supported us in the right way.
- COMMENT UNDER FUNDING – None so far, but we're in discussions with a charitable trust and are receiving some free architectural services from another practice
- We would like to thank Digbeth Trust for all their kind support.
- The work of the consultant fell into two parts. The grant enabled us to fully complete part one but a further grant to complete part 2. Would have build built on the efforts exposed in part 1. However, we were very grateful for the grant to fund part 1
- Both the programmes were essential and an intrinsic element for the development of LCAC. It has given LCAC a strategic direction and forward integration. We have received £147,000 in funds and acquired the Investor in People. I would like to thank Rita and Kate for their immense support and confidence without which none of the current positive elements could have been achieved
- We are very grateful for the help and expertise that Digbeth Trust gave us!
- This grant via the Digbeth Trust was of very great assistance in enabling us to move for a feasibility study to a fully funded project
- This grant was very helpful and has left an indelible mark on our organisation. Without it, we would probably, still have not started on our 'journey'. We realise that we still have a long way to go but what matters is that we started, anyway, and we are still moving on. Thanks to the Digbeth Trust
- If it wasn't your organisation we would not be here today. The support from staff and dedication is extremely excellent. Thank you!!
- If we did not get support for the first feasibility study we would not have been able to secure the Sports England Money. We used this study from 1999 in 2004. The worker help us secure additional funding to carryout small activities but these activities showed Sports England we could carryout sporting activities for women and girls if we were given a chance! You were the first organisation that helped us when no one else would
- FUNDING INFORMATION – provided by Kate from Digbeth
- Our grant from Digbeth Trust was excursively for engaging an architect to do a feasibility. This work has created or advanced the cause of our organisation. All answers to the question have been provided in this light.
- Support from the consultant – Debbie Veitch – funded by the Digbeth Trust has enabled Ryders Green to upgrade policies e.g. business plan and examine Roles – Responsibility' of Management Committee Members. We hope that funding will be more accessible as a result of this work. Thank you Digbeth Trust for your financial support.
- COMMENT ON FUNDING – Funding bids have not yet been submitted to potential funders due to other things et consultation etc needing to be altering
- Thank you we are now better equipped. Keep up the good work
- Still awaiting final report from consultant to be able to action
- We have been able to review our activities, the project, as a whole thoroughly, further we have been able to refocus, with a view for developments to continue to take place. In addition we have revised our budget costings to reflect necessary changes that will take place
- The support which Digbeth given us, was a great help. We do need help to run our Soho Forum day to day. It only be done if we get more help. Sorry for the delay

- The first consultant was not as useful as the second with whom we have formed a long-term relationship. The Digbeth Trust was very helpful
- The small grants from Digbeth Trust has enabled Horn of Africa Youth Club to develop its services and sustainability. We have now appointed a full time co-ordinator and hoping to employ more in the future
- The report was useful to us because we knew we did not have the time to do it ourselves and the research conducted will be of benefit to the organisation in mapping proposed services and making informed funding applications
- Comments from all over the form: I am filling this in in relation to Judith's support (2002) not the feasibility study (99-00) (page 1). Worker had no experience of writing bids to community fund (page 3). See previous page. I believe that where possible if providing support for fundraising the Trust should employ support workers with a proven track record of a range of fundraising. (page 4).
- The feasibility study was to look at informing the local community in the SRB6 areas of our facility and activities and to see if they are interested in either visiting the centrally located venue or to have visits from our instruction. Although a number of organisations have made use of the offer from the Handsworth and Ladywood area, we were still unable to secure SRB6 Finance to assist local groups to further benefit from our services. If there are funds available via the Digbeth Trust to assist local groups to benefit from our services it would be appreciated.
- It was a pleasure working with the Digbeth Trust. The workers were quite helpful. They did take the time to make sure that the need of the organisation was matched to the funding. They were also able to put us in touch with suitable qualified consultants.
- A useful support for the organisation
- Very fortunate that the development worker had a significant understanding of the needs of the project. In depth work by the DT DW ensured maximum number of partners were fully involved in process
- Due to reasons beyond our control, recently Exodus had to cease delivering projects. This was a decision not easily arrived at, however all investment have developed adequate skills to continue in various aspects of community development
- As a result of the feasibility study, and knowledge of it in the community, an organisation (actually two in partnership) have come forward and is actively pursuing the possible refurbishment and use of the building. But there are still many bridges to cross!
- The work that Rita Corrigan carried out was very helpful to our project. However, we requested a consultant to help with bid applications/fund raising. Balbir informed us that this was not within her remit. At that time we required no further assistance from her. We did not use the full funding awarded to us.
- Although the nursery had to close the charity is run in a much more business like manner as part of a much larger Montessori organisation, which is well funded and provides much greater potential, but unfortunately not in Birmingham at the moment.
- The grant helped us the management members to understand better our role and responsibilities in helping to run the organisation and what sort of service we provide to our clients.
- We had to change our consultant over from David Blakemore and Michael Ngene. Both proved to be un useful and only caused me valuable time and resources.
- We have recently become a SureStart Outreach Centre and are looking at expanding (have just received an SRB6 Grant to build on extension)
- Funds received has made it possible to develop from monthly event for the community to providing Kids Against Crime, out of school workshops in Ladywood. This year we have extended to running tow KAC programmes one in Ladywood the other in Woodview. We work closely with the West Midlands Crime Fighting Team and look fro to extending our programme to others areas of Birmingham
- We have every confidence in Sue Gazey, and appreciate her guidance. We feel once we are accepted as a Registered Charity we shall benefit from her knowledge

- Through the grants our networking has improved
- The support we had re applications for small grants has been excellent/successful, we now have one member running the office and another who is seeking funding to carryout advice and guidance. We also work with a group called 'Yungsta' via SBC to teach media (music course)
- Business plan completed by the assigned development support worker did not fulfil the requirements of the funder and in effect when submitted with funding proposals was highlighted as the main reason for refusal i.e. business plan should be relevant to the proposal not just the organisation
- Q9 is not relevant yet as we are still in progress
- Dojo thank Digbeth Trust for the assistance ??? by way of funding for the business plan. While presenting the business plan however to various bodies we were informed that the business plan was more of an assignment. However Dojo have now become wiser and focussed due to the help of the business plan. Thank you
- The organisational review resulted in the resignation of the old management committee and a new pro-active committee elected. We also relocated the organisation, to a more accessible, user-friendly site. The business plan has allowed us to plan the way forward for the organisation

## **Appendix 3**

### **Case Studies of VCOs Assisted**

## **CASE STUDY 1**

### **Guru Nanak Community Centre, West Bromwich**

Although the Guru Nanak Community Centre, operating from its premises in Victoria Street, West Bromwich, has previously received three years' of revenue funding from the Greets Green New Deal for Communities programme, it is still relatively early days for the group. It currently has only one paid worker and is highly dependent on the time, energy and goodwill of its volunteers and Trustees.

The project is well aware of the NDC programme and its internal workings – the Vice Chair of NDC is a Trustee of the project – and acknowledges how important NDC funding has been in helping the group progress to their current state. Even so, all of the Board members interviewed confirmed that the complex requirements of larger scale funding applications present them with a serious challenge and anticipate that they will need help for some time to come in developing larger bids, although they hope that the experience of working alongside the First Steps-funded consultant will enable them to complete smaller bids themselves. This has yet to be tested, however, as the group has not completed a funding application since that developed with them for £145K of Community Fund revenue resources under the First Steps programme of assistance. In particular, the Trustees drew attention to the jargon and complex language involved in bid writing. While many of them have their own area of work specialisms – sometimes with its own associated jargon or technical language – the language and concepts of community regeneration they acknowledge do not come naturally to them and the professional assistance has in this respect been vital.

The First Steps assistance worked slightly differently for this group and in that sense has probably not been typical. The consultant secured under the First Steps application has previously worked with this group – on both a paid and a volunteer basis – and had developed an extremely good relationship with the organisation. Because of this, the group negotiated their commission directly with her on confirmation that their First Steps application had been successful (other commissioning briefs for consultancy support have tended to be mediated by the Digbeth Trust development worker).

The consultant undertook business planning and a fund-raising application for the group. Trustees confirm that they were involved in all stages of the development of the bid, both in its larger first draft and subsequently when initial feedback from the Community Fund assessor indicated that the scale of the bid would need to be reduced in order for the Community Fund to consider funding it in its entirety. It was at this point that it was reduced to £145K.

If successful the bid will fund six new posts and effect a step-change in the scale and capacity of the organisation. If unsuccessful the group hopes that further assistance will be available via Greets Green NDC so that they can secure further professional assistance with fund-raising.

The project's Trustees have nothing but praise for the work of the consultant involved – in particular, her patience, when they asked for various parts of the Community Fund application process to be explained on repeated occasions. Indeed, such is the relationship developed with the consultant that the organisation has since offered her – and she has accepted – a place on their Board of Trustees.

They found especially useful her understanding of the language needed to frame a bid, her ability to work collaboratively with the group and develop a clear understanding of their needs and limitations and her ability to get valuable initial feedback from the assessor which they feel they could never have done successfully had they been trying to develop this major bid on their own.

The whole process has clearly been a positive one for the group and they have a general impression that this is the case for the vast majority of other groups assisted.

Although the Digbeth Trust development worker apparently played only a small part in this particular example, the organisation has – partly from its own prior experience and contacts – negotiated a successful commission, conducted in a way that they appreciated. They are waiting hopefully to hear the outcome of the bid.

## **CASE STUDY 2**

### **Birmingham Bangladesh League (Formerly Bangladesh Youth League)**

Birmingham Bangladesh League (BBL), established in 1999 as the Bangladesh Youth League, has over the past two or three years in particular made a conscious effort to broaden its client base, delivering more services for adults alongside its established services for youth and young children. The organisation delivers educational trips, a weekend supplementary school (maths and Bengali) and a range of basic skills provision, including CLAIT and ESOL, in conjunction with two FE partners. It is currently planning the development of an internet café and a range of other adult programmes.

More recently it has entered into a bidding consortium with three other local organisations and has been successful in securing additional SRB6 funding to deliver capacity-building and fund-raising skills/training aimed at local unfunded community organisations, of which there are an estimated 400 in the SRB6 area.

BBL was the beneficiary of two consultancy grants under SRB6, one providing organisational capacity-building (with a particular emphasis on fund-raising) and one business planning expertise. Despite an inauspicious first approach to the Digbeth Trust – BBL feels that its original enquiry was not well handled and that its initial information needs, which it acknowledges were acute, were not accurately met – its subsequent experience of the SRB6 Small Grants Programme managed by the Trust appears to offer an exemplar of how the programme should work.

The initial capacity-building and fund-raising support enabled the group to successfully bid for additional funding. Although relatively modest sums, these resources have made possible a step-change in the organisation's operation. It has moved from being a 'front room' operation to acquiring shop-front premises in Crompton Road, Handsworth and now employs three staff and three part-time sessional workers (for its supplementary school activities). The organisation has expanded its services, diversified its client group and now has a clear idea of where it is going and the priorities it wants to tackle.

Both the Chair and Secretary of BBL believe the Trust's assistance has made a permanent difference to the organisation's skills and capacity.

A key factor seems to be that the consultancy grants made possible the right input at *the right time*. "At the time, we couldn't find any other development agencies that could help us," says BBL's General Secretary, "but the Digbeth Trust could. Its service is unique." The organisation believes that the Trust's assistance at what was a crucial time in its development is the reason it is still here.

Although BBL has made significant progress over the past couple of years, it acknowledges that learning and skills development is a continuing process and with financial assistance from the Charities Aid Foundation has been able to commission a further six-month period of capacity-building and training from one of the consultants who carried out the Digbeth Trust/SRB6 work.

The consultancy support provided under the SRB6 Small Grants Programme has without doubt helped build BBL's capacity but more importantly has also transferred skills which the organisation is now in the process of 'recycling'. In less than four years, BBL has developed not only its own direct service delivery but also its abilities to provide capacity-building and fund-raising support to other local groups who are just starting out.

### **CASE STUDY 3**

#### **The AEKTA Project, Handsworth, Birmingham**

AEKTA has received two grants via the Digbeth Trust: a small grant from Birmingham City Council Economic Development Department's organisational development fund (2001) and a more substantial grant to commission an external feasibility and diversification study (2003/04).

The AEKTA project is a service delivery and campaigning organisation providing advice, guidance, job search assistance, personal development, employment rights information and representation to all sections of the community and especially those in low-pay industries.

AEKTA began life as the clothing industry action research project in 1985, funded at that time by the county council. Following abolition of the metropolitan county authorities in 1986 the project for a period received funding via Birmingham City Council Economic Development Department, but since 2002 the only funding available to the project has been that under Birmingham City Council's ESF Objective 3 Co-Financing programme. This has proven problematical for AEKTA and has required a significant shift in the project's aims, outputs and service delivery priorities, requiring a much greater emphasis on employment training and advice and assisting individuals into work.

In the event, the organisation found itself having to carry out a major refocusing of its service priorities in something like twelve months. Although the feasibility and diversification study played a vital role in this refocusing – assisting the organisation to better understand the funding opportunities available and its responsibilities and responses under the terms of co-financing – ultimately these changes somewhat overwhelmed the present capacity and expertise of the organisation and its co-financing agreement was terminated after one round.

Although AEKTA did not therefore secure co-financing for the financial year 2003/04, it has managed to continue operating albeit at a much reduced capacity (one worker instead of three), largely as a result of one further quarter's co-financing under the local authority's funding termination arrangements, some residual payment from the preceding financial year and successful applications to the Home Office Challenge Fund and the SRB6 Community Chest fund.

But even here, with the Home Office funding – which specifically targets work to support refugee communities – the organisation has again found its delivery capacity and expertise severely tested. At time of writing, the organisation is facing an extremely uncertain future. A substantial Neighbourhood Renewal Fund appli-

cation is still being considered and an SRB6 capital grant of £18.5K for premises improvements is on hold until such time as that programme is assured of the sustainability of the organisation.

The organisation is clear that it must change and adapt to the changing requirements of the funding opportunities that now exist if it is to survive, but grasping the complexities of these issues has been difficult for both staff and management committee members and it is evident that current capacity – to both continue modest levels of service delivery and drive through a survival strategy for the organisation – is extremely limited. Nonetheless, the remaining staff member is determined to try and achieve this and still views the consultancy funded by the SRB6 programme as having been a vital step in helping the organisation gain a better understanding of what diversification and change means for the organisation and how it can meet these challenges.

But it is clearly **implementation** that is the problem. If it is to survive – and at the moment everything pretty much hinges around the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund application being successful – there are a number of needs that will have to be met. AEKTA needs:

- Staff and organisational development support in building its capacity and skills to meet the requirements of new funders and new funding regimes
- Staff – and probably management committee members too – need training and personal development in order to understand the requirements of new service delivery responsibilities and new client groups, such as refugees
- It is increasingly evident that the organisation needs to secure charitable status so that areas of its non income-generating work can be more readily supported and new and different funding programmes are opened up to the project
- And it needs assistance to continue working on and submitting funding applications as it is virtually impossible for the one remaining staff member to do all that is required in this crisis period.

While AEKTA acknowledges that without the grant support available under the SRB6 programme and the external consultancy this commissioned it would have struggled to develop an adequate understanding of the need for organisational change and the implications of this change, it is nonetheless overwhelmingly apparent that unless some kind of **practical follow-on assistance** is available to the group its prospects for driving through the necessary change strategy, of convincing funders of its long-term sustainability, and of **rebuilding the organisation** are slender.

AEKTA, more than any other VCO encountered during the process of this review illustrates the need for a more flexible and responsive support service than that which is enabled solely by small grants provision.

It is hard to see how AEKTA – and indeed other organisations that may share similar difficulties when they are trying to meet periods of intensive organisational change with inadequate resources, capacity and expertise – can survive unless some form of dedicated periodic support can be offered to the organisation as a means of assisting it to implement a change and rebuilding strategy.

-Ends-