Influences on the development of Big Local areas: main messages for areas from our research

January 2014

CDF visited 14 Big Local areas to talk to a range of people involved in Big Local. We also sent an online survey to one actively involved resident in 145 Big Local areas and 101 residents replied.

Key messages for areas

Take the lead

Big Local is resident led which means you are in control. We found that most areas believe they are resident led but, in practice, some are looking to others such as the rep or locally trusted organisation to take the lead at times. It may be valuable to reflect on how resident led your steering group or partnership is and what would help you to develop this:

- Who do you look to for support to make decisions and why?
- What would help you to feel more comfortable making these decisions yourself?
- Who is leading your meetings and driving activity?
- What do you want to change about how your Big Local area is working?
- What, if anything, is stopping you and how can you overcome it?

You can use the pathway as a guide to the steps you will go through in your journey. It is flexible and does not have to be followed in order.

Make the most of your networks

Big Local areas are tapping into support from lots of different people and organisations. Is there more that these networks could offer?

- Are there any more people or organisations that could help you?
- What do you need help with and who do you know that could help link you to other helpful organisations?
- Could you link more to Star People in your area and find out more about what they are doing and how they could help you achieve your vision for Big Local?

We found that locally trusted organisations are a key source of support to residents and there may be value in exploring whether they can link you to other networks or learning opportunities if they haven't done so already. There is value in being in contact with other Big Local areas who can inspire and help you learn from their experience. If you have a support need Local Trust cannot meet, explore within the network of other Big Local areas to see if someone has the skill, knowledge or experience you could draw on.

Think differently

Explore ways that you can help people to think differently about what your area needs. Get inspiration from other areas and share it, use data to highlight things they might not know, ask people to imagine how the area could be when the children grow up.

If you choose to get a paid worker, make sure it is a solution that will build the skills and confidence of residents in the longer term. Make the most of them by asking them to focus on getting more people involved to help in future and ask them to share their skills and knowledge so you can learn from them.

Shout about what you are doing

Residents most actively involved in Big Local understand it is about investing in the area over the long term, but other residents are not always aware of this. You may wish to use local media and draw on your network to help people understand why this is good for your area. In talking to areas we often found that they have achieved more than they recognise. Share your progress regularly so that the wider community can see the valuable work that is going into making your area an even better place to live.

Some areas said that Big Local is not visible to the wider community or they did not connect what is happening with Big Local. You may want to think about how to make this connection stronger – some areas developed their own brand for example.

Local Trust

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