Bringing People Together

Summary of learning from Year 1 as Learning Partner

July 2023

NDTi National Development Team for Inclusion

COMMUNITY FUND

> *"It's a story about people, and relationships and place."*
> (Quote from Reflection and Learning session)

The National Lottery Community Fund's Bringing People Together (BPT) Programme is seeking to understand what works in bringing people together. The Programme is funding projects that will enable communities to thrive and prosper by creating the conditions, infrastructure and social fabric that enable better and longer lasting ways of bringing people and communities together.

The National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) is working alongside the Programme to draw out and capture emerging learning to benefit the wider sector. The headlines from our first year in this role are summarised below. All quotes are from members of the Programme.

The Programme is helping to bring people and communities together in an exceptionally tough context, for example:

- Helping to **forge connections across divides** by creating new opportunities for rich, important conversations that explore difficult issues and help people increase mutual understanding

- Increasing **positive micro-interactions** between people, leading to cumulative change

- Strengthening a **sense of belonging** through uniting people around a shared goal, vision, purpose or passion

> *"Nearly half of attendees (of one event supported by BPT) feel more likely to speak to their neighbour in the future (49%), more likely to volunteer (37%), more likely to both host community events (33%), and take part in them (55%)."*

> *"(Participants) have wanted to continue connections and dialogue outside of sessions, continuing to work outside the remit of this project."*

Some projects are creating ripples of influence through their wider impact upon people, places, organisations and the community infrastructure such as:

- Building **new partnerships and relationships** with other organisations, groups and networks across sectors, as well as different communities
- Supporting the third sector and businesses to **share scarce resources** for the benefit of communities
- Helping to **shift power to communities**, with more people stepping up to be local leaders for change
- **Influencing what others do**, such as councils or transport services.

"(Participants) are already making changes by being positive change makers, a really positive surprise."

The projects are also learning _how_ to bring people together, including identifying the critical success factors, and tackling the barriers that can get in the way, including:

- **Investing in relationships**, building trust and finding the spark that will ignite action and motivate people to take part
- Taking time to **lay the foundations** at the outset, including finding and engaging the right people, identifying a compelling reason to connect, mapping what is already in place and co-designing what needs to happen
- Increasing the **skills and confidence** of the people and roles that help to reinforce the social fabric
- Working **flexibly and responsively** as circumstances and contexts change
- This flexibility extending to **funders who listen** and respond alongside the change makers
- Recognising the **factors that make it difficult** to bring people together, including the aftermath of the pandemic compounded by the cost of living crisis, and friction and suspicion within partnerships
- Developing **strategies and approaches** to maximise their chances of success by understanding the context and working in ways that make the most of the factors that enable change.

"We have to be a good option with great values."

"Every aspect of our learning has shown us that relationships and trust are key ... Every relationship matters to the process and the better the relationship, the richer the outcome."