Bristol Ageing Better Community Kick-Start Fund

BRISTOL AGEING BETTER

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UWE Bristol
University of the West of England

Contents

About this report

This report is part of the wider evaluation of the **Bristol Ageing Better** programme, an initiative funded through the Big Lottery Fund's *Fulfilling Lives: Ageing Better* national programme.

The report is the product of a collaboration between many people:

- BAB Community Researchers (CRs):
  Jeremy Groome Christine Crabbe, Jan Fullforth, Anne Jensen, Mike Kimber and Christopher Orlik led on the research fieldwork, data analysis and report drafting;

- UWE Researchers:
  Mat Jones (UWE lead) and **Jenny Barke** led on the study design, project management and advisory support to CRs. **Robin Means** and **Naomi Woodspring** initially led the evaluation of BAB, before passing on the roles to the current team;

- BAB staff team:
  Adam Rees (BAB lead), Ruth Richardson and **Bianca Rosetti**, set the overall study brief, provided practical support for the fieldwork, collected project monitoring and implementation records, and assisted with report design.

CRs and UWE collaborated on study questions, the interpretation of the findings and report production. The interpretations in this report are those of **Jeremy Groome, Christine Crabbe, Jan Fullforth, Anne Jensen, Mike Kimber, Christopher Orlik, Jenny Barke** and **Mat Jones**.

We would like to thank the Kick-Start fund-holder representatives who agreed to be interviewed as part of this study and who supported the evaluation through providing BAB information about their project.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Small grant and micro-funding schemes are widely used in the voluntary and community sector, and particularly so with older people's groups. These initiatives are thought to offer a wide range of benefits. However, they are rarely subject to formal evaluation and there is little published evidence of their implementation and impact. This report presents a study of the Bristol Ageing Better (BAB) Community Kick-Start Fund. This is the first piece of research on micro-funding to actively involve volunteer Community Researchers at the centre of the evaluation.

The BAB Kick-Start Fund is a scheme that offers small funding of up to £2,000 to support the development of new activities to reduce isolation and loneliness in older age. The scheme is open to any charity, community group or group of older people.

Community Researchers (CRs), supported by UWE and the BAB programme team, are a group of older people who volunteer to collaborate on the evaluation of a range of BAB projects. Before this study, the CRs had conducted two evaluations on other aspects of Kick-Start. The first explored the perceptions of unsuccessful applicants and developed recommendations to BAB on how to improve the operation of the scheme. The second study examined perceptions of grant schemes by small community groups. The CRs found that, while members donated their own time and money, small groups struggled to find routes into funding opportunities for new initiatives.

In this study, CRs assessed the strengths and limitations of the scheme through semi-structured interviews with 17 out of 26 groups that were successful in the first round. Supplementary evidence came from an analysis of programme records collected by the BAB team.

Analysis of programme records on the Kick-Start Fund

The projects were very diverse in their characteristics and were delivered by an equally diverse range of groups. Projects included those that targeted very specific and locally defined needs, such as orthopaedic chairs to allow very frail people to attend an elders group at a community hall. They were also often creative, fun and imaginative, for instance a therapeutic poetry and visual arts performance group of older people culminating in a performance at a care home.

The projects tended to be based in places where there is high social need, with 30% located in the top 10% of areas of multiple deprivation in England.

Programme records showed that the majority of successful applicants applied for less than the ceiling funding of £2,000 available, with an average application total of £1,628. This appears to have enabled the BAB funding panel to extend the funding to a reach a larger number of groups than originally planned.

The projects had a substantial reach: 22 fund holders[1] reported involving a total of 671 beneficiaries to date, with a range of 4 to 348 and an average of 31.

The mean unit cost was estimated to be £54 per beneficiary, excluding management and administration overheads. The overheads, as indicated in an analysis of BAB staff time, showed support was tailored to the project complexity and group needs.

Interview findings

The majority of interviewees described the Kick-Start application process as 'positive', 'excellent', 'straightforward', 'easy', 'personable,' and 'unbureaucratic'.

The speed of turnaround on the outcome of the applications was described as very acceptable overall, with an excellent flow of communication. Follow-on advice and support from BAB was highly appreciated, and helped connect their local project to a city-wide and national programme.

There were mixed views concerning payments for goods and services. Under Big Lottery Fund rules, BAB could not award grants, but had to directly make purchases through invoices. This caused some difficulties adjusting to an unfamiliar system. A positive aspect was that it meant that it reduced the burden on groups to report back on spending.

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1 Data were available for 22 out of 26 fund holders at the time of reporting.

Groups reported extensive and wide-ranging benefits of the scheme. The introduction of new material goods, equipment, paying for trainers and tutors as well as hiring suitable venues established an important focus for group activities. Kick-Start enabled friendships to be renewed, old skills revived, and new skills learnt, and encouraged participants to work together. There was a strong level of local ownership of the project. Some successful applicants felt more confident to apply for other funding, award opportunities or to move towards formal charitable status.

Most interviewees provided a clear explanation of how their projects helped tackle isolation and loneliness. The main theme concerned creating a safe, comfortable environment where people were able to come together. People attended the Kick-Start funded activities for various reasons; for example, to learn with others, to chat, share problems and solutions, and to have some time away from their partners at home, or just to have a change of environment.

There were additional unexpected benefits. The goods purchased were used for other projects. There were spin-offs as people came together to set up new activities or collaborate with new partner agencies. Group organisers felt encouraged to think about who could be a volunteer and think about drawing volunteers from a wider section of the community, particularly those who were marginalised in some way. Some activities helped generate additional funds through, for example, craft sales.

There were few drawbacks to the funding. Some areas of concern were: future project sustainability, becoming a 'victim of success' as projects started to over-reach initial aspirations, a desire (for one interviewee) to accelerate and build on work while volunteers and group members were most enthusiastic.

Interviewees largely recommended that schemes like Kick-Start should be kept flexible for small groups. They emphasised that small groups were crucial and must not be forgotten: a 'scatter-gun' approach was better for reaching small community groups. Some groups felt that £2,000 was about the right amount to start-up and a larger sum was not needed. Two interviewees thought that fewer and larger funding opportunities might be better. Overall, there was not a clear theme on whether the funding should be in smaller, the same or bigger amounts.

Discussion and Conclusions

The revised application, panel decision and post-award support processes all seem to be working. Following the 'test and learn' ethos of the BAB programme, the evaluation identified areas for further adjustment to clarify instructions, promote outreach, avoid potential bottlenecks, and develop end of project resources for groups wanting to move forward.

BAB gathered, through the Kick-Start scheme, a motivated and enthusiastic group of organisers and leaders and there needs to be opportunities for transfer of person-to-person and group-to-group learning.

The evidence suggests that the Kick-Start scheme is relatively low cost to administer and manage and has substantial reach in areas of high social need. We identified no evidence of misallocation, duplication or redundant funding. Some projects leveraged in considerable added value in the form of additional volunteering, funding and other forms of resource.

Efforts to quantify and value the impact of Kick-Start, and similar initiatives, are a challenge. This is partly because small groups often do not have the capacity to engage in intensive monitoring and evaluation work. This limited our ability to assess the degree to which the projects impacted on social isolation and loneliness, although interviewees were able to describe how these impacts would occur.

Recommendations

This Kick-Start evaluation is one element in the wider evaluation of the BAB programme. As the programme develops we anticipate that learning from the Kick-Start evaluation will be linked to wider evaluation findings on the programme. The evaluation identified a number of adjustments that could improve the publicity and applications process; opportunities for feedback and mutual learning between fund-holders; links with other funding opportunities and sources of support.

Further research could examine the longer term impacts of the scheme, especially with respect to isolation and loneliness; the relationships between the Kick-Start Fund and other BAB supported initiatives; the relationships between the Kick-Start Fund and existing neighbourhood activities; the return on investment of the scheme; and the perspectives of wider stakeholders, including fund panellists and funding agencies engaged in similar work.

Chapter One:

Introduction

Older age has been identified as a time of increased loneliness (Qualter et al 2015) and, it has been estimated that 10% of the UK population over 65 are lonely all or most of the time (Victor 2011). As people get older specific risk factors for loneliness become more likely such as losing a partner, retiring from work, increased physical disability and poor health of self or partner (Dykstra et al 2005, Victor et al 2005, Middling 2011). But it is important to be clear that loneliness is not simply about individual circumstances, prevalent negative social attitudes towards older people, and ageist stereotypes, are likely to isolate older people and excluded them from engaging in society (Abrams et al, 2009, Nash 2014).

Bristol Ageing Better (BAB) is a partnership of individuals and organisations working together over five years to reduce isolation and loneliness among older people in Bristol. BAB aims to create an environment in which partner organisations can deliver effective services, share their knowledge of what works, and be noticed by the people who matter. The partnership is led by Age UK Bristol and funded by the Big Lottery Fund as part of their Fulfilling Lives: Ageing Better programme. The programme aims to reduce isolation and loneliness in older people in Bristol through commissioning projects across four main themes of:

1. Creating the conditions to reduce and prevent loneliness

2. Identifying and informing older people at risk of loneliness

3. Working with communities to increase the services and activities available

4. Supporting individuals to live fulfilling lives

As part of the third theme, BAB are running the Community Kick-Start fund to encourage communities to support local isolated and lonely older people by offering resources to kick-start neighbourhood activities. The BAB Community Kick-Start Fund is an example of a form of micro-funding widely used in the voluntary and community sector, and particularly so with older people's groups. These initiatives are thought to offer a wide range of benefits. However, they are rarely subject to formal evaluation and there is little published evidence of their implementation and impact.

This report starts with an overview of the Kick-Start Fund, the early evaluation findings and current developments of the scheme. It then outlines the evaluation methods, the analysis of programme records and the findings from interviewees. The final sections discuss the wider implications of the work, the main conclusions and recommendations.

Some activities helped generate additional funds through, for example, craft sales.

Chapter Two

BAB Community Kick-Start Fund

2.1 Introducing the Fund

Through its Community Kick-Start Fund, Bristol Ageing Better (BAB) has committed £250,000 to support the development of new activities designed to reduce loneliness and social isolation in older age. This Fund is one of the 16 initiatives of BAB made possible by a £5.9 million grant over five years from the Big Lottery Fund (BLF). The Kick-Start scheme allows any charity, community group or group of older people to apply for a grant of up to £2,000 for goods and/or services that will support such activities.

Activities should address the interests of local older people and aim to continue beyond the initial grant support period. Applications can cover supply of goods (e.g. equipment needed to start a new activity) or delivery of services (e.g. training provision, room hire and basic refreshments for activities taking place within the period of the grant). However, under the grant condition of the Big Lottery Fund it is not possible for BAB to make a grant of money to an organisation. Therefore, under the Community Kick-Start Fund, BAB purchases the goods and/ or services on behalf of the successful applicants.

2.2 The process for selection, payment and monitoring

The initial invitation to apply went out on January 2016 and subsequent invitations went out in April, June, September and January 2017. Interested applicants could access the two-page application form on-line or by contacting the BAB office. The application form was supported by a two-page explanatory note.

Successful initiatives were selected by a panel of volunteer older people who were members of the Bristol Ageing Better Steering Group. The BAB team liaised with successful award holders to arrange for purchasing of goods and services. A member of the BAB team was available to offer advice and conducted monitoring visits up to six months following the award. Fund holders were required to return a short monitoring form that included information on the number of beneficiaries.

2.3 Early stage evaluation of Kick-Start Fund

This report builds upon small scale evaluation studies relating to the early stages of the Kick-Start Fund. In the first study the sample was 11 organisations and groups from the 1st round of applications that had been unsuccessful. Representatives were interviewed individually by a team of Community Researchers (CRs) working singly or in pairs between June and August 2016. A report, detailing method and recommendations, was submitted to BAB in September 2016 (BAB Evaluation, 2016). The key learning from this study was:

- **Information leaflet.** The information leaflet should be significantly expanded and clarifications made. Emphasis should be laid on the need to focus activities on older people and to include evidence of support from older people.

- **Application form.** The form should be expanded to include additional information on the applicant and the venue of the new activity; simplification of the questions and explanation as to how the form can be completed; and, explanation on the process of submission of quotes.

- **Understanding of the financial process.** The process of submission of quotations by applicants and the method of payments to the individual organisations should be clarified with the BAB staff responsible for the implementation of the project and then explained simply to the applicants as part of the application process.

All the recommendations were accepted and significant improvements made in the three areas.

In the second study (BAB Evaluation, 2017), CRs undertook interviews with small community agencies in Brislington, an area that appears to have been historically underserved by community grant making bodies. The aim of the interviews was to gauge awareness and engagement with BAB, as well as a review of some local community assets in the area.

Although not directly focusing on the Kick-Start Fund, key learning from this study found:

- Despite significant voluntary in-kind support and membership contributions, groups often struggled with expenses for both new and existing activities.

- Groups encountered problems with suitable and affordable venues, and appropriate transport.

- Groups had very limited awareness of small grant funding opportunities - including the BAB Kick-Start Fund.

- Groups appreciated out-reach and locally targeted BAB Kick-Start publicity.

2.4 Future developments for the Kick-Start Fund

At the point of producing this report, the Kick-Start Fund is in the process of launching a further series of funding rounds. In keeping with the wider aspirations of the programme, BAB is adopting a 'test and learn' approach for the Kick-Start Fund. This means that it is part of an ongoing process of reflection and development. The present evaluation study has an important role in helping with this process and has a bearing on at least four important areas:

1. **Refining of Kick-Start funding rounds** with the aim of making the scheme more equitable, effective and efficient over time. BAB has already been drawing upon the early stage evaluations to enhance the Kick-Start Fund.

2. **Connecting Kick-Start funded activities to other BAB projects** and similar local activities, with the aim of helping to make BAB more than 'the sum of its parts.' This is already an area of interest for BAB-funded agencies, for example in the area of community development.

3. **Informing local service developers, funding bodies and policy makers** on how to build upon, possibly embed, Kick-Start type funding in Bristol. BAB has already established a relationship with St Monica's Trust to pilot a Kick-Start plus Scheme.

4. **Informing national practice, policy and research** on how to develop initiatives that are similar to the Kick-Start Fund. This is an area that is under-researched. Agencies such as the Big Lottery Fund, the Centre for Ageing Better, the Local Government Association and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations all need to know how learn from best practice.

To summarise, the BAB Kick-Start Fund is a scheme that has the potential to be of great benefit, especially to small community groups who may be working closely with socially isolated and lonely older people. Evaluation of the scheme is essential to develop better understanding of this type of initiative locally and nationally.

Brislington, an area that appears to have been historically underserved by community grant making bodies

Chapter Three:

Evaluation aim for this study

The aim of this evaluation of the Community Kick-Start Fund is to assess the strengths and limitations of the scheme from the perspective of successful applicants. These perspectives are put in the context of information about the delivery of the initiative.

This Kick-Start evaluation is one element in the wider evaluation of the BAB programme. As the programme develops it is anticipated that learning from the Kick-Start evaluation will be linked to wider evaluation findings on the programme.

Chapter Four:

Evaluation Methodology

4.1   Study design

This is an evaluation of the procedure of delivering the project (a process evaluation), that also helps shape future delivery (a formative evaluation). The evaluation primarily consists of key stakeholder case study interviews. This is supplemented with an analysis of Kick-Start applications, funding agreements and monitoring data provided to BAB. The Kick-Start scheme is delivered in phases, and the specific lines of enquiry for the evaluation will develop over the course of the scheme. This mirrors the 'test-and-learn' ethos of the BAB programme.

4.2   Analysis of Kick-Start project documentation

With the support of the BAB programme team, the monitoring records of the Kick-Start Fund were analysed. This information covered the types of projects, the number of beneficiaries, the project post code locations, the value of the awards, and an estimate of the time involved in administering projects. The analysis consisted of a simple descriptive summary to help put the findings from the interviews in the context of the wider scheme.

4.3   Development of the interview schedule

A group of six CRs held meetings in November 2016 and January 2017 with UWE staff to define the format of the survey schedule and confirm the actual wording of the qualitative questions plus an appropriate Consent Form (Appendix 1 and Annex 2, respectively). The questions were as follows:

1.   **Overall how would you describe your experience of obtaining the award? (What happened?)**
    Follow-on Q:
    - How would you compare it to other funding opportunities?

2.   **In what ways did the Kick-Start fund benefit your organisation?**
    Follow-on Qs:
    - Were there any benefits that you did not expect?

    - Has the fund helped you do anything new, or differently? For example, reaching out to new people or working with new partner agencies.
    - BAB aims to address isolation and loneliness among older people in Bristol. Did the award help you do this? If so, how?

3. Were there any drawbacks linked to receiving support from the Kick-Start Fund?

4. Do you have any recommendations about the Kick-start Fund? *Follow-on Qs*:
   - Do you have any advice to other people who might want to apply?
   - Do you have any advice to funders who might want to run a similar scheme? For example, might it be better to issue fewer but bigger funding opportunities?

The interview topic guide was informed by learning from the early stage interviews with unsuccessful applicants and CR training on interview techniques.

4.4 Interviewee selection and recruitment

BAB management office circulated all successful applicants from the first application call with a letter explaining the interview process plus an Interview Topic Guide, a Participant Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form (Appendix 3 and 4). This material plus copies of the original application forms and names, list of addresses and contact details of the relevant staff were also circulated to the CRs.

A total of 26 groups and organisations were allocated to individual or pairs of CRs who made contact by email or phone and arranged face-to-face visits to conduct the interviews. CRs regularly communicated amongst themselves to confirm progress and discuss any complications. A breakdown of the successful applicant groups is detailed in the table below, which resulted in 17 completed interviews.

Table 1: Successful applicant groups

Category of applicant	No.
Interviews face-to-face	15
Interviews by email	2
Contact not possible*	5
Successful applicants not contacted	4
Total	26

*1 group not functioning, 2 groups no reply to contact, 1 group could not confirm a mutually convenient date for interview and 1 group was not available because of bereavement

4.5 Interview data recording and analysis

CRs used the topic guide to note responses from interviewees. This included selectively writing down quotes from interviewees. This data was collated, with key themes identified following guidance on qualitative data analysis (Lofgren, 2016):

1. Reading transcript quickly then carefully

2. Labelling or 'coding' words and sections that are repetitive, unique, what the interviewee/ interviewer consider are important or relevant

3. Bringing these 'coded' words together in groups or categories

4. Giving a title to these categories

5. Ranking the categories

6. Preparing the results

In practice, it was decided not to undertake a full thematic analysis of the data. Instead key categories were collated on an Excel spreadsheet by Christine Crabbe, then key themes were discussed at a meeting involving all CR interviewees. These key themes were recorded and used as a basis to organise the findings.

4.6 Research ethics

Ethical approval for this research was obtained through the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol), Health and Applied Sciences Research Ethics Committee, Reference HAS.16.11.045.

Chapter Five:

Findings: Community Kick-Start Fund project records

Information provided by the BAB team shows that the Kick-Start Fund has been used to support a wide range of projects. While some applications were entirely for goods, others were more service-based or combined both goods and services. The box below provides an illustrative list of types of projects.

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⑦ What gets funded?
– Examples of Kick-Start funded activities

Practical English course for older Asian women including talks by the Fire Service, Police and Ambulance services about how to communicate in emergency situations

Memory Cafe enabling older residents to share their memories of their neighbourhood

Therapeutic poetry, creative writing and visual art group for a small group of older people culminating in a performance at a care home

Set up and initial six months' funding for a Community Cinema

Orthopaedic chairs to allow very frail people to attend an elders group at a community hall

Training and studio time to begin a Bengali elders' radio show

Enhanced activity provision for a community group, including sewing machines and kitchen equipment

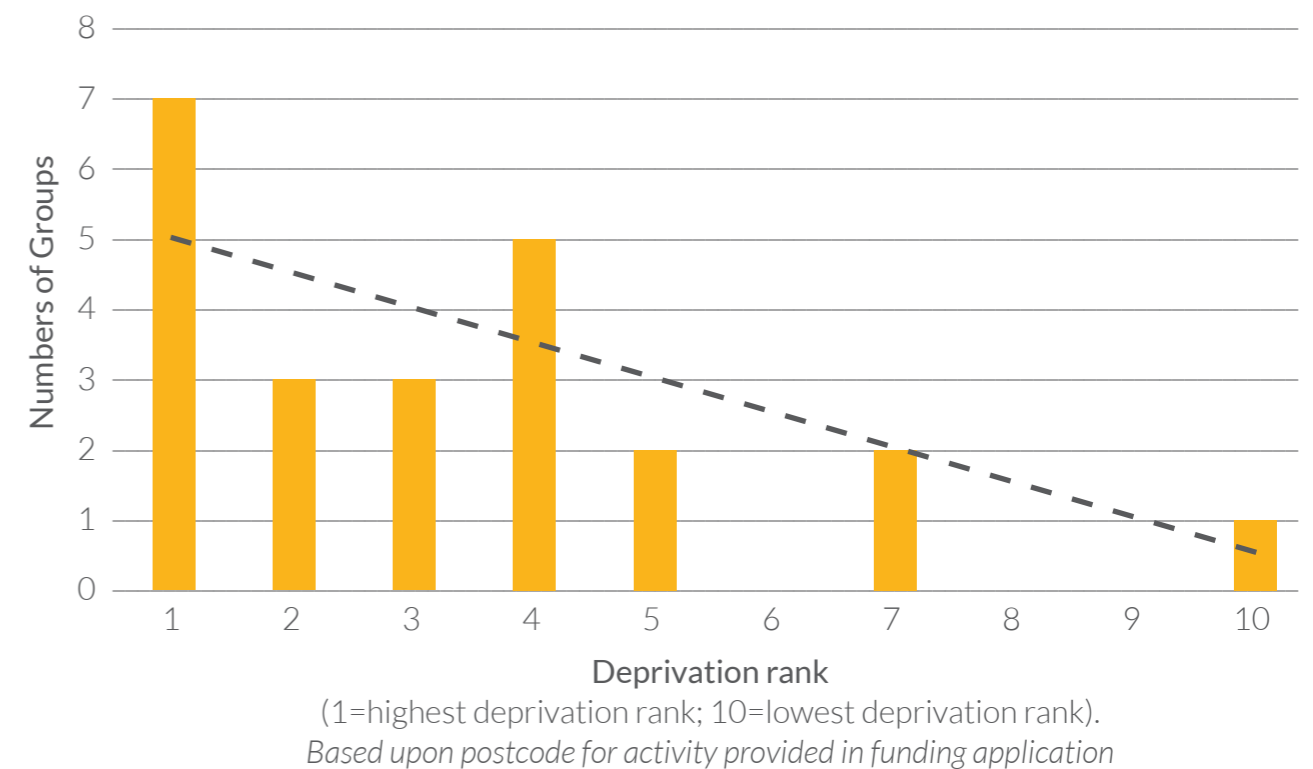**A year-long programme of craft sessions** for older people, using donated materials

Weekly community choir for care home residents and wider community, including events with local primary schools

New Age Kurling class: a team game suitable for all ability and mobility levels

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Figure 1 shows that the projects tended to be located in areas of higher deprivation in the city: 30% of groups are located in areas of very high multiple deprivation (7/23 group postcodes in highest decile for the England Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2015).

Out of 26 successful applications, only 11 applied for the maximum – or very near – £2,000 funding award available. The average funding was £1,628, with a range from £552 to £2,000. This represents 81% of the total available funding package of £52,000 (the maximum for 26 projects at £2,000).

Chart 1: Distribution of groups in areas of deprivation – Index of Multiple Deprivation Decile (2015)

Deprivation rank
(1=highest deprivation rank; 10=lowest deprivation rank).
Based upon postcode for activity provided in funding application

The projects were reaching a large number of beneficiaries: 671 for 22 projects where the data were available, with a range from 4-348 and an average of 31.

Using the funding and beneficiary data for the 22 projects monitored, the mean unit cost is £54 (£1,628/30 beneficiaries), excluding management and administration overheads. While we do not have a complete picture of these overheads, Table 1 presents information about the time involved for the lead BAB officer involved in overseeing the projects. We developed an estimate of total staff time based upon an analysis of three projects that involved different levels of support. These typical levels of support were then used to categorise the 22 projects.

Table 2: Analysis of time involved by the BAB Partnership Support Officer in post-award support

Level	Reference case: Time analysis	Reference case: Total number of hours	Number of projects	Total time based on reference case
Low	Arranging checklist meeting; creating checklist; purchasing; payments schedule: *1 hour* Attending checklist meeting; sending email to Project Lead with scanned checklist and evaluation details: *2 hours inc. travel* Ordering the equipment; processing the invoice inc. updating finance spreadsheets: *1 hour* Collection of participant data: *30 minutes* Follow-up visit: *2 hours* Writing up report: *1 hour*	7.5	7	52.5
Medium	Arranging checklist meeting; creating checklist; purchasing; payments schedule: *1 hour* Attending checklist meeting; sending email to Project Lead with scanned checklist and evaluation details: *3 hours inc. travel* Financial admin (incl. setting up credit account with local food supplier); creating and sending invoice templates for chef; processing 18 invoices; providing 3 instalments of petty cash in person; updating finance spreadsheets; emailing updates on budget spend to Project Lead; taking calls; chasing up invoice payments: *10 hours* Collection of participant data: *45 minutes* Follow-up visit: *3 hours* Writing up report: *1 hour*	18.75	12	225

(Table continued overleaf)

New Age Kurling class: a team game suitable for all ability and mobility levels

Table 2: Analysis of time involved by the BAB Partnership Support Officer in post-award support (continued)

Level	Reference case: Time analysis	Reference case: Total number of hours	Number of projects	Total time based on reference case
High	Arranging checklist meeting; creating checklist; purchasing; payments schedule: *1 hour* Attending checklist meeting; sending email to Project Lead with scanned checklist and evaluation details: *3 hours inc. travel* Ordering equipment online: *1.5 hours* Liaising with equipment supplier on delivery dates; assisting with returning faulty goods: *1.5 hours* Meeting Project Lead and facilitator at textiles shop; paying for materials with petty cash: *2 hours* Financial admin (including processing 5 invoices); providing petty cash in person; updating finance spreadsheets; emailing updates on budget spend to Project Lead; taking calls; chasing up several invoice payments: *8 hours* Collection of participant data: *45 minutes* Follow-up visit: *4 hours (on the first visit, the Project Lead had forgotten to inform us that the class was cancelled that day)* Writing up report: *1 hour*	22.75	5	113.75
Totals			**24**	**391.25**

Chapter Six:

Findings: Perspectives of Kick-Start Fund Holders

6.1 Profile of interviewees

The people taking part in the interviews for this study were all agency managers or community group organisers.

6.2 Overview of key themes

The following section covers the main themes to arise from the interviews. The headings broadly range from the point of obtaining the award through to the initiative's perceived impacts.

6.3 The successful award experience

The majority of applicants described the Kick-Start award experience as a mixture of 'positive', 'excellent', 'straightforward', 'easy', 'personable,' and 'unbureaucratic'. Only one applicant described the experience as difficult, as the organiser was unsure of what was required and needed more explanation. This organiser was also worried about letting the community group down.

6.4 The application process

The information documentation was recorded as being straightforward, written in simple jargon free language, and appropriate for small groups. The bulk of applicants felt the tone of the documentation was supportive and additional information was not required. However, a minority considered more information would have been helpful and a comment was made that the information pack did not provide the conditions of the grant.

6.5 Publicity

Some applicants circulated Kick-Start information to other groups and organisations. One community group had heard about Kick-Start from a Neighbourhood Partnership member. Another community group had successfully applied to Kick-Start twice, their first application had only been found out about from a local paper on the day of the deadline. Further, an applicant commented that they learnt about the BAB programme from an email and had not heard about BAB previously.

6.6 Communications with Bristol Ageing Better (BAB)

BAB staff played a significant role in successful outcomes by offering guidance and advice in completing the application form. This information was given by telephone, email and during personal visits of applicants to the BAB office. In addition, BAB staff visited community groups to answer questions, discuss procedures, and solve problems. Support was also given by BAB staff when consulted about associated areas such as personal liability insurance. One applicant remarked that it did not feel like "us and them, but we were working together to reduce isolation."

CASE STUDY 1:
Bristol and Avon Chinese Women's Group

As soon as Rui Yan Chen, Carers Services Manager of the Bristol and Avon Chinese Women's Group, saw the advertisement for the Kick-Start Fund back in early 2016, she thought the idea was just what their group wanted. She found the process of completing the application form simpler than that from other local funding groups, any questions were quickly answered by BAB and the turn-around between application, and receiving acknowledgement of the award was not too long.

Yan Chen recounted that, 'For a long time we had wanted to work with those elder Chinese in Bristol who were basically house-bound or just had nowhere to go. Having access to the Kick-Start Fund means that now they are able to get together once a month; we promote exercise activities (tai-chi) and a skilled activity like knitting'. The group that now meets regularly are all retired and mostly women (12) although they do get 3-4 men coming on a regular basis.

'What has been really interesting', Yan Chen related, 'is that the knitted products produced have been better than we expected and some learners have become teachers. This has strengthened the group and given them confidence. Also, the products have been posted on Facebook and WeChat (Chinese social media) and this has encouraged other people to come along. So apart from developing knitting skills the participants now have a wider range of contacts and are more used to using internet and social media'.

The participants then wanted to improve their skills further and have discovered that they can use You-tube to learn new knitting skills. This they are doing and then talking to each other on social media and sharing these new skills. These new IT skills help the participants keep in contact between the meetings. 'I never thought that they would develop the use of social media so quickly and competently', remarked Yan Chen, 'and it has certainly reduced isolation within the group.'

However, nothing beats meeting face-to-face and the members of the group consider that meeting just once a month is not enough. In particular, they find that they 'forget' the Tai Chi exercises. Yan Chen concluded, 'We are working hard to identify additional funds so that we can keep the group going after Kick-Start money has run out'.

6.7 The Kick-Start application form

The majority of applicants considered the application form short and straightforward, and filling it in was relatively simple. However, this was not the experience of a community group whose first language was not English and whose members were not English speakers. Another group enlisted a person who had previous experience with another organisation to help complete the application form, and a further applicant remarked that applying for small sums of money was easier.

In comparison to other funding opportunities, the majority of applicants described the process as easier, simpler, and less stressful than working with other agencies. It was generally considered that the application forms of other funding agencies required more information, although one community group considered the practical application process "quite muddled" because of the time it took for BAB to respond to emails. However, this group's problems were solved with a face-to-face visit. One community group organiser mentioned that the process was a little more demanding because they had to think through the goals of the project, which they considered useful "and not something" [the organiser] "thought should be moved away from."

6.8 Speed of turn around

The turnaround time from making an application to hearing whether it had been successful was described as very acceptable and excellent in the flow of correspondence and communication.

There was a problem with one group's postal address because they only hold monthly meetings at that location, so they did not reply quickly to BAB and this extended the application process.

6.9 Financing process

There were mixed views concerning invoicing and payments. The invoicing method was considered a problem by some groups, as they did not know exactly how much money to estimate for particular services. Therefore, the estimates provided to BAB could have been under what they really needed. Obtaining accurate estimates of costs in an official form made the financial aspect difficult to accept. One community group reported difficulties as their members were not experienced in creating and submitting invoices and another group commented that they had an invoice problem because BAB was not recognised.

A community group organiser raised the problem of using personal money to make purchases and then presenting receipts for reimbursement. In addition, a group's planned start-up date necessitated going ahead with the purchase of equipment as delivery dates required the equipment to be bought in advance of the grant award. The group organiser commented that grant rules about purchases being made by BAB meant the organiser could not get the money back, which was 'tricky'. It was suggested that there should be some leeway on this, even if it was only 10% of the entire grant. Payments to individuals were sometimes slow and caused embarrassment to organisers and frustration and annoyance to

providers. It was also reported that cheaper suppliers would not accept confirmation of the order over the phone, which resulted in having to accept options that were more expensive. Nevertheless, despite the problems of payment delay there was a feeling among a number of organisations that this was better than dealing with the administration related to making payments, as community groups merely had to obtain quotes and inform BAB. The transfer to BAB of the responsibility of paying suppliers was generally considered 'a good thing' and a community group's leader remarked that it stopped bickering over money and accusations of fraud or 'fiddling the books'.

6.10 Financial drawbacks of the BAB funding system

Ancillary costs incurred by the organisation had not been taken into account in the budget and were not allowed in Kick-Start. These were often larger than the organisation expected and could be difficult to absorb. Some of the organisations and community groups were disappointed that they could not reapply for funds to run another round of the same activity.

6.11 Benefits to organisations and community groups

The benefits to community groups were extensive and wide ranging. The introduction of new material goods, equipment, paying for trainers and tutors as well as hiring suitable venues established an important focus for group activities. Kick-Start has enabled friendships to be renewed, old skills revived, and new skills learnt,

and encouraged participants to work together. The activities encouraged people to talk together and this 'broke the ice'. Participants developed confidence and it empowered them to be more independent, which attracted others to the group. Kick-Start funding enabled subscriptions to be kept low as well as piloting new initiatives without incurring any significant risk and enabled collaboration with other agencies. Group members often felt passionately about their activity sessions and it allowed the participation of a wider section of the community. In addition, in some groups IT and social media enhanced communication. Refreshments and cake also helped to promote conversations.

Through Kick-Start funding it was possible to reach out to those with vulnerable and complex needs, for example, hiring specialist vehicles to transport people in wheelchairs and purchasing specialist chairs. This enabled group members to not only attend the group, but also stay longer and participate more in conversations. A group organiser commented that they were able to link up with another organisation who could provide training to some members of their group to become leaders. A successful Kick-Start award also resulted in closer relationships with other community organisations. It was remarked that a successful applicant's organisation feels valued by BAB. The successful award of a Kick-Start grant increased the confidence of organisers; they were enabled to become an independent entity and one group moved to a better hall. It encouraged group

organisers to think about who could be a volunteer and think about drawing volunteers from a wider section of the community, particularly those who were marginalised in some way. Some longstanding needs for a particular activity could be met and for some people the Kick-Start funded activity was the only lively thing they did in a week. In some activity sessions, not only new skills were learned, but also participants developed learning materials which could be used in the future. In other activity sessions, individuals could share the poems and the craft items that they had created and even sell some of the items they had made.

6.12 Reducing isolation and loneliness

Creating a safe, comfortable environment where people were able to come together contributed to reducing isolation and loneliness. People attended the Kick-Start funded activities for various reasons; for example, to learn with others, to chat, share problems and solutions, and to have some time away from their partners at home, or just to have a change of environment. Regularly shared activities allowed friendships to develop in a local meeting place. Group visits outside the regular meeting place stimulated further conversation and created memories, which could be shared later. The use of social media helped to reduce isolation for some people, but frequency of meetings was important and some group organisers considered once a month was not enough to retain continuity. One group leader reported that people participating in English and music

classes spoke for the first time and a social network formed. Some group members were isolated within small supported living type homes and there are few places for them to meet others, but the Kick-Start club provided an option. Once a club or activity 'got going' a core group of regulars attended and closer friendships were formed and closer relationships between carers developed.

6.13 Unexpected benefits

Whilst community groups expected or hoped for particular benefits, there were also many things that were unexpected. It was found that participants were willing and interested to cascade the benefits they experienced, so others could set up their own groups in the future. One of the groups commented that participants had moved from creating things for leisure to making things to be sold to support the future of the group. Individuals in a group are also making and growing things for their group's site, donating them and taking on responsibility to look after the site. Difficulties and experiences were shared amongst groups whilst working on an activity and solutions to the difficulties suggested. The Kick-Start award enabled new skills to be learnt in a safe, comfortable environment and this led to group members feeling nurtured. Learners became teachers, and individuals with social problems became volunteers within the group. Group sizes were maintained over the lifetime of the activity and sometimes increased, and participants encouraged leaders to expand their activities.

CASE STUDY 2: Growing Bolder

'Growing Bolder' is a group that helps older people reconnect with their passions, express themselves through art, and grow bolder as they negotiate their 'third age'. It was set up by two colleagues who were counsellors who were aware of the issues sometimes faced by people who had retired. They offered a series of six meetings to do different creative activities with refreshments and time to talk. The groups culminated in a celebration event, one of which was held in a care home where some residents also participated in the performance. Barbara Bloomfield, one of the organisers, had been concerned about how to find lonely and isolated people. Despite publicity of the project being largely limited to using social media (they had not allowed for the time and cost of advertising in their budget), there was a good response. Barbara had been amazed by how much need the participants expressed – "there is a lot of loneliness". The ages of participants ranged from 55-78. They included several with mobility problems, some with mental health problems, and others who had been recently bereaved.

Barbara felt heartened by the success of the groups and the way in which they resulted in friendships and cascading of activity. Members started doing other activities together such as dancing, meeting for coffee, and some started their own groups to do activities they enjoyed. Comments from participants included "it really changed my life".

An unexpected benefit was that parallel organisations worked together to purchase materials that could be used by a variety of groups and Kick-Start resulted in greater community involvement. Helpful support was forthcoming from Bristol City Council and the local housing officer. A local college collaborated with a Kick-Start group and relationships with a professional theatre group were developed. Another group reported that a spin-off was an intergenerational cafe at a local school. In addition, the opportunity for community groups to meet with representatives of 'official organisations' helped reduce mistrust. One of the groups mentioned that its goals were happening much quicker than thought possible. Members "experiencing mental health difficulties are interacting socially with members who have learning difficulties and are developing first name friendships," which was a major change.

In general, the unexpected benefits were numerous and varied; participants learnt totally new skills that encouraged communication. One group learning English attended by younger women had spin-offs within the family; for example, women reading books to their children and attaining a greater status within their families.

6.14 Social drawbacks of funding

Drawbacks to funding were few. Some groups were concerned about the possibility of losing the support of members if the new activity could not be sustained in the future and learning gains would be lost if the activity ceased. Others were concerned that

CASE STUDY 3: Harbourside Tai Chi Group

Judy, one of the three local people who set up the Jacobs Wells Community Hub, was the driving force behind the establishment of The Harbourside Tai Chi group. The Hub team is an informal action group that started because it was felt that BS8 was a 'forgotten community'. In addition, there are many new flats by the Harbourside occupied by older people and the area lacks community activities.

Judy and her colleagues had heard about the Kick-Start Fund from a member of the Neighbourhood Partnership Forum and their application was one of the first round of applications in March 2016; the Tai Chi group started in September 2016. Initially, the group was based in a small community room of a local block of flats managed by the City Council but, after the Kick-Start money, the group was able to move to the Pavilion on the Harbourside. This provided more space and better facilities. The Pavilion was built by the Council as an 'urban village hall'. The community room upstairs had previously been let at a commercial rent, but with the backing of the Kick-Start Fund, and after a campaign, the group were able to reclaim the room for

a proven community use at a more realistic rent.

The Kick-Start funding not only covered the rent but also insurance, brochures and the fees for a tutor for 20 classes. The classes on Thursday mornings, are advertised on notice boards around the community. The charge was £3 for over fifties, up to the end of the grant period. There was demand for the classes to continue and this meant charges had to increase to cover all costs and ensure future viability. Nevertheless, about 20 older and disabled people continue to attend the Tai Chi sessions which continue to be led by a professionally trained teacher. Feedback from the participants is encouraging:

The group can make tea and coffee after the Tai Chi session so participants are able to socialise and friendships have been forged and networks accessed.

"I had the joy of attending this class last Thursday. What a fabulous teacher, venue and price. I hope to attend regularly."

"I wanted to write to say a very big thank-you … a really good session of Tai Chi … I found her so life-enhancing … Her calm teaching method made us all feel so involved and so welcome. "

"I've met people I'd never have met."

"It got me out of the house, when I wouldn't have left it."

"It makes me centred and grounded and as I have MS that is a must."

"We have a real community feel."

the low frequency of meetings led to continuity being a problem. One group found that they were a victim of their own success; people were brought to the group by carers from sheltered housing and others with mental health difficulties and this created health and safety issues. Timescale was a drawback for one of the applicants who needed to start the activity while the idea was fresh and people excited about it. A further applicant would have liked more two-way communication with BAB in order to build up a closer relationship. 'Crowd Funding' was mentioned by a group organiser who was concerned that the group's project would be unsustainable without some type of additional funding.

6.15 Successful applicants' recommendations about the Kick-Start Fund

- Groups frequently mentioned a need for more discussion and advice on sustainability and continuity, and organisations would like to know in advance whether more funding would be available in the future, so that they could prepare a long-term plan.

- Prompts on the kind of things that should be provided in the budget would be useful, specifically in relation to administration.

- Information was needed as to whether Kick-Start could be used to part-fund activities, or if two organisations could apply jointly.

- Information about budget and expenditure would be helpful, perhaps quarterly or six monthly.

- Issue of levels of engagement emerged and the need for training and support that cannot be met by the organiser need signposting.

- Organisations and community groups involved with BAB could signpost and BAB could connect with them to provide information about the groups that are already active in the locality of those applying for funding.

- Greater publicity of funding opportunities would be useful and one group remarked that the BAB website was not used a lot.

- For sustainability, a process of being able to identify sources of core funding and sourcing would be useful.

6.16 Successful applicants' advice to funders who might want to run a similar scheme

It was felt that Kick-Start should be kept flexible for small groups. It was emphasised that small groups were crucial and must not be forgotten and a scatter-gun approach was better for reaching small community groups. Some felt that £2,000 was the right amount to start-up and more was not needed. However, one applicant considered £4,000 a better sum. Another suggested that a small amount could do a great deal, e.g. Kindles bought for a group of people over fifty years old to use the internet for the first time, creating a life changing potential for that group. The applicant felt fewer but bigger funding opportunities might be better. A group organiser remarked that it is important to keep the activity on offer in proportion with what people wanted, and their abilities.

Chapter Seven:

Discussion

7.1 Community Researchers comments on the application and financing processes

Based on the interviews, statements on financial legal responsibility and public liability insurance could usefully be added to the notes in the Participant Information Sheet. In addition, even more prominence could be given that BAB staff are happy to:
(i) answer any queries face to face, by telephone or email;
(ii) offer guidance to filling in the financial aspects of the application form: and
(iii) explain the details of how to provide a range of quotes.

Further, the notes should advise applicants that BAB staff could visit organisations in their home environment to discuss the application preparation process if that was considered easier, more convenient or less daunting.

Finally, there should be a statement that the finance procedure is a requirement of the Big Lottery Fund and not BAB. This additional prominence will attract increased contact from applicants.

There are potential bottlenecks at two stages in the application and financing processes: in the immediate period following the announcement of the application (clarification and enquiries about preparing quotations); and,

during the purchasing period, after the grant award. BAB need to ensure that they have adequate staff to cover this additional work load.

7.2 Community Researchers general comments on Kick-Start

Benefits were many and drawbacks few. Concerns centred on wanting to 'get on' with the new activity, reducing costs and continuing, sustaining and financing the activity in the future. However, it appears that these discussions arose after the activity had begun and sustainability and continuity were not components of the original design process. The majority of groups wanted more information on funding sources, procedures, ideas on sustainability, which perhaps needs to be flagged up from the beginning, but not be a mandatory part of the application. Some organisers considered they would gain from advice from others rather than being able to provide it. This raises the question of whether there is a need for a Kick-Start organisers' six monthly meeting.

Ethnic minority issues and learning English are important contributors to social isolation and loneliness and this was forcefully reflected in the relevant interviews. The interviewees did not always appreciate the level of understanding of BAB staff to these problems. Whilst the criteria for approving Kick-Start applications

included the requirement for sustainability, it is unsure how this was interpreted for the future. In most instances, it was understood simply as the continuation of funding after the Kick-Start allocation ceased. However, applications need to include an indication that there will be long-term benefits which may include continuation after funding but would not necessarily be confined to this.

For different groups this meant different things. Where the initial grant focussed on the provision of materials and equipment, and the group was established and stable, there were few problems of continuity and the projects reported that the purchases enhanced the group's activities and, in many cases, either stabilised or expanded the membership.

In the situation where the grant had been used to buy services, the opportunities for continuity were limited. Little thought seems to have been given to securing alternative funding to continue the service, or to transfer of the necessary skills throughout the group (all the group members attain the necessary competence – e.g. the use of social media) or the development of the necessary knowledge base within the group to address future training needs (a core group of members take on the role of teacher – e.g. specific knitting techniques).

On the social side, several of the initial projects resulted in longer term outputs that had beneficial effects on participants and the wider community.

Examples included the development of friendships which resulted in wider social participation, the cascading of social groups and development of skills facilitating social activities. In addition, some projects contributed to community development. This suggests that even where it has not been possible to continue the Kick-Start activity, there may be longer lasting benefits.

Invoicing difficulties could possibly be surmounted by producing a pro-forma invoice format that organisations and community groups might use. This would overcome inexperience in the submission of invoices, particularly for non-fluent English speakers. There were no hard opinions on whether money should be in smaller or larger sums, from discussions some groups want some core funding so that they can continue the work they have started and with which they are satisfied.

BAB has gathered, through the Kick-Start programme, a motivated and enthusiastic group of organisers and leaders and there needs to be a campaign of structured opportunities for transfer of person-to-person and group-to-group learning. This would include the transfer of experiences on linked learning opportunities, for example the development and transfer of skills e.g. knitting, the expansion of learning opportunities e.g. through YouTube; and the communication of these new competencies e.g. through social media (WeChat), which all stimulate the establishment of a social network.

Finally, a community group organiser commented that the BAB approach was a "good strategic approach" and that funding might be a useful stepping-stone to becoming a charity. Further, it was apparent from the description of benefits, both expected and unexpected, that Kick-Start is valuable in reducing social isolation and loneliness in older people.

7.3 Strengths and limitations of this study

This is the first study in the UK, to our knowledge, in which peer researchers have played an active role in evaluating a micro-funding scheme. The study brings together data from a variety of sources. The involvement of multiple authors has helped improve the rigour of the work through accuracy checking and discussion of interpretation of the data.

The study did not interview all award holders and might have identified different findings if it had included the perspectives from fund holders in the second round. We did not directly collect information from participants, except in cases where group organisers were also 'consumers' of the Kick-Start funded goods and services. We were not able to gather detailed information on participants' demographics or measures of personal change.

Chapter Eight:

Conclusions

The revised application, panel decision and post-award support processes all seem to be working. Following the 'test and learn' ethos of the BAB programme, the evaluation identified areas for further adjustment to clarify instructions, promote outreach, avoid potential bottlenecks, and develop end of project resources for groups wanting to move forward.

BAB gathered, through the Kick-Start scheme, a motivated and enthusiastic group of organisers and leaders and there needs to be opportunities for transfer of person-to-person and group-to-group learning.

The evidence suggests that the Kick-Start scheme is relatively low cost to administer and manage and has substantial reach in areas of high social need. We identified no evidence of mis-allocation, duplication or redundant funding. Some projects leveraged in considerable added value in the form of additional volunteering, funding and other forms of resource.

Efforts to quantify and value the impact of Kick-Start, and similar initiatives, are a challenge. This is partly because small groups often do not have the capacity to engage in intensive monitoring and evaluation work. This limited our ability to assess the degree to which the projects impacted on social isolation and loneliness, although interviewees were able to describe how these impacts would occur.

This Kick-Start evaluation is one element in the wider evaluation of the BAB programme. As the programme develops we anticipate that learning from the Kick-Start evaluation will be linked to wider evaluation findings on the programme.

Chapter Nine:

Recommendations

Signposting and application

- Kick-Start Fund should have greater publicity of funding opportunities and arrangements for support during the application process.

- Prompts should be included in the initial information leaflet on what should be provided in the budget preparation, e.g. administration costs.

- Potential applicants should be provided with information as to whether two organisations can jointly apply for the same Kick-Start project, or whether one organisation can apply for part-funding of a larger project, or utilise other funding sources including social funding, e.g. crowdfunding.

- BAB delivery partners have are well placed to signpost, promote and support applications for BAB Kick-Start funding with community groups, particularly with groups less familiar with making applications for small amounts of funding

- BAB could provide a resource base of trainers who could support small organisations in building a project proposal.

Financing

- There were no hard opinions on whether money should be in smaller, the same or bigger lumps.

- Keep the Kick-Start fund flexible for small groups and give advice about boundaries for support needs which are beyond the scope of the project.

- Small groups are crucial and must not be forgotten.

- There needs to be a process of being able to identify possible core funding and sourcing for the sustainability of small community projects.

Feedback

- Successful applicants should be provided with a simple feedback form on which they can report details about budget expenditure on activities on either a quarterly or six monthly basis.

Mutual learning

- Some organisers felt that they would gain from advice from others rather than being able to give it. This indicated a need for a Kick-Start project organisers' six monthly meeting.

- There needs to be opportunities for transfer of learning experiences from group to group and the sharing of ideas on linked learning opportunities (e.g. knitting lessons on YouTube and networking on WeChat).

Continuity

- Almost all organisers wanted more information on areas such as funding sources, procedures, and ideas on 'sustainability'; this last needs to be flagged up from the beginning but not be a mandatory part of the application.

- Applicants should be provided with opportunities of signposting on where to access advice about different options relating to the possible sources of funding after the initial implementation period. This would provide organisations with information on which they could prepare a long-term plan.

- Organisers should be provided with support on how to identify and nurture the necessary skills from within their team, their volunteers and the membership to maintain the momentum of their activity.

Further research

- Further research could examine the longer term impacts of the scheme, especially with respect to isolation and loneliness; the relationships between the Kick-Start Fund and other BAB supported initiatives; the relationships between the Kick-Start Fund and existing neighbourhood activities; the return on investment of the scheme; and the perspectives of wider stakeholders, including fund panellists and funding agencies engaged in similar work.

Chapter Ten:

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Appendix 1:

Kick-Start interview topic guide for fund-holders

COMMUNITY KICK-START FUND
– Interview Topic Guide for Fund-holders

Introduction: I/we are member(s) of a team of volunteer Community Researchers who work with the BAB Programme evaluation team from the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol). One of our tasks is to explore the strengths and limitations of BAB funded projects. The answers and comments you give today will help us advise the BAB Programme Management Team on any improvements that could be made to these processes for future applicants. All information will be kept strictly confidential and any report will ensure your anonymity.

Title of your Kick-Start funded activity

_____

Organisation: _____ Name: _____

Position in organisation: _____

Paid employees: Number _____ = a full time equivalent of _____

Example: "2 half-time employees = 1 full time equivalent"

Number of trained volunteers: _____

Were you involved in submitting the Kick-Start application to BAB?

(Please circle whichever is appropriate)

Yes   No

1. Overall, how would you describe your experience of obtaining the award? (What happened?)

   Follow-on Q:

   - *How would you compare it to other funding opportunities?*

2. In what ways did the Kick-Start fund benefit your organisation?

   Follow-on Qs:

   - *Were there any benefits that you did not expect?*

   - *Has the fund helped you do anything new, or differently? (For example, reaching out to new people or working with new partner agencies. BAB aims to address isolation and loneliness among older people in Bristol. Did the award help you do this? If so how?)*

3. Were there any drawbacks linked to receiving support from the Kick-Start Fund?

4. Do you have any recommendations about the Kick-start Fund?

   Follow-on Qs:

   - *Do you have any advice to other people who might want to apply?*

   - *Do you have any advice to funders who might want to run a similar scheme? (For example, might it be better to issue fewer but bigger funding opportunities?)*

   Thank you for your time and help.

Interviewer(s): _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2:

Consent form

Participant Number: _____

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS – Bristol Ageing Better Evaluation

Title of Project: _____

Name of UWE Researcher: _____

Name of BAB Community Researcher: _____

Please strike through the option that is no applicable

1. I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions

    Yes/No

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw up to one month after today's date without giving any reason

    Yes/No

3. I understand that direct quotes may be used when the project is written up, although they will be quoted anonymously

    Yes/No

4. I agree to my interview being audio-recorded

    Yes/No

5. Photos are taken at some evaluation events. These photos may be selected for use when this project is written up to help describe what we have been doing and why it is important. Are you happy for us to share pictures of your project in this way?

    Yes/No

6. I agree to take part in the above study

    Yes/No

Name of Participant

_____

Signature _____   Date: _____

UWE Researcher and/or BAB Community Researcher

_____

Signature _____   Date: _____

1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher

Appendix 3:

Letter to request evaluation interview with Kick-start fund-holders

Dear (named person on the application)

From the start of BAB a team of volunteer community researchers (CRs) has worked with the Programme staff. They assist us by conducting surveys of areas to see what resources are already in place, talking to organisations who have been grant aided and by undertaking evaluation activities.

In the autumn of last year the CR team talked to some of the organisations that were not successful in their application for Kick-Start money. They would now like to talk to some of the successful applicants about the application process and how the grants have worked for them.

Your organisation has been chosen in the sampling process and we hope that you will agree to meet with one of our CRs. Meetings will not take more than half an hour and can be arranged at times that are convenient to you.

Enclosed with this letter is an information sheet, a copy of the interview schedule and an `informed consent' form. In the near future a CR will phone you to arrange a convenient time to meet when you can together complete and sign the consent form and then conduct the interview.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 4:

Bristol Ageing Better Evaluation: Participant Information Sheet

Bristol Ageing Better Evaluation: Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in an evaluation of a Bristol Ageing Better project. We would like to ask you about BAB's Community Kick-Start Project. Before you decide whether or not to take part it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information and discuss it with others if you wish. Contact either of the two people mentioned at the end of this Information Sheet if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Why is the research taking place and who is organising it?

A group of community researchers are working with the University of the West of England and support from Age UK Bristol to evaluate some of the activities that are taking place across Bristol as part of Bristol Ageing Better (see: www.bristolageingbetter.org.uk). We would like to invite people who have taken part in projects to give their feedback.

Do I have to take part?

No, taking part is voluntary. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. But even then you will still be free to change your mind and withdraw your data without giving a reason; however, we ask that you do this within one month of taking part. Nobody will be offended if you decide not to take part or change your mind.

What do I have to do if I want to take part?

If you agree to take part in an interview this would take place at a time and place convenient for you. We may ask to audio record the interview and then transcribe the interview; once it has been transcribed all the recordings will be destroyed.

What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?

We are required to tell you about any risks to you should you agree to take part in research. However, in this instance we are not aware of there being any risks to you, although it is important to note that the evaluation will involve you spending time thinking about loneliness which can be upsetting for some people. Similarly, we don't expect there will be any direct benefits for you; however some people find it interesting to take part and talk about their

[continued overleaf]

experiences. The information you give us will help us to understand your experience and this is your chance to discuss your ideas about the project you were involved with and its value in reducing isolation and loneliness.

What will happen to the results of the research and will my taking part be kept confidential?

Any personal information which is collected from you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for research and evaluation purposes. Quotes from your responses may be used when we are explaining our findings but we will not use your name or identify you or your organisation. The findings will be sent to everyone who takes part in the study. They may also be reported in professional publications or meetings and events including: Bristol Ageing Better Evaluation and Evidence Group; the organisations running the project you have taken part in; and, The Big Lottery that is funding the work.

Who has reviewed this study?

This study has been reviewed by the University of the West of England Research Ethics Sub-Committee to make sure that it is being carried out in an ethical and scientific manner that will not put participants at risk.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Notes