

Ten year follow-up

In 1988, its first full year of operation, the Grants Committee of the Trust for London made 184 grants totalling £477,000. Two thirds of all the grants were to fund work in the fields of social welfare, education and training, community work and disability. All those funded were small local community groups.

Of the 184 grants 22 were made to women's groups, 18 to black and minority ethnic women's groups, and 47 to other black and minority ethnic groups, reflecting the priority given to such issues by the Trust. As part of the tenth anniversary it was decided to follow up the groups funded in 1988 to gain some understanding of the effect of the original grant and to see how the groups had fared in the intervening ten years.

The staff who had been involved with the original grants were not optimistic about the survival rate of the groups bearing in mind their size, recent establishment, the alleged volatility of small organisations and the difficult funding period since 1988 - only latterly relieved by such benefactors as the National Lottery Charities Board.

In the event the long-term follow-up was an extremely positive experience. It was at times frustrating but also exciting. A variety of methods were used to trace the groups and these had a snowballing effect so that eventually it was possible to trace almost all of the funded organisations.

Methodology

Tracing some of the 184 groups involved a lot of detective work. It was made easier by the limited area of benefit, namely London, and the fact that three staff who were involved at the beginning

are still with the Trust. The last known addresses of the funded organisations were obtained from the Trust's files and an initial survey was carried out by questionnaire.

The questionnaire sought details of whether the organisations were still in existence, their staffing levels, annual income and sources and their most significant achievements.

The Trust was aware that some organisations would be difficult to trace because they were not operating from their last known address or had ceased to exist. The initial response to the questionnaire showed these fears to be well-grounded, so it was decided to try other methods to trace them.

These included making inquiries of the Charity Commission, local councils of voluntary service, local authorities, London and national umbrella bodies and personal contacts in the boroughs. In addition to the general survey of the 184, an in-depth study was made of a sample of 27 organisations. These were all visited by the Policy and Monitoring Officer. These 27 consisted of seven women's organisations, 13 black and ethnic minority groups and seven others.

Main findings

Outcome: Of the 184 organisations funded in 1988, ten years later

- 125 (68%) are still operational.
- 12 (6.5%) have merged with other organisations.
- 40 (22%) have ceased to function.
- 7 (3.5%) cannot be traced.

This means that three quarters are still active, a far higher figure than staff ever anticipated. Of the groups which have

ceased to operate, many were either play-groups, which only lasted for one or two generations of parents, or specific illness groups where the deteriorating health of members led to a group's closure.

Even those which ceased generally did so between 1993 and 1996 and were therefore operational for at least five years. A comparative ten-year follow up

funded groups had only been formed since 1983, the remaining 43 had been established between 1962 and 1982. For the majority the Trust's grant was the first of any description they had received.

Size: By definition, all the groups funded were small (defined by the Trust as having the equivalent of no more than two full-time staff). In fact in 1988 only 13 organisations had a full-time member of staff and only 21 had part-time staff. By 1997 this situation had changed so that 45 now employed staff, full-time or part-time. This did not include the numerous sessional workers, tutors and volunteers who worked for these organisations, some of whom were paid on an hourly basis.

The number of part-time workers ranged between two and five per organisation while the number of full-time workers ranged between two and four per organisation. Two organisations employed more than six full-time workers.

Finances: In 1988 the finances of the organisations clearly showed the embryonic nature of many of the groups

income	n o.
under £5,000 (inc £0)	139
£5,000 to 10,000	19
£10,000 to 20,000	15
£20,000 to 50,000	9
over £50,000	2

By 1997, 46 organisations reported a significant increase in income including seven organisations which had had no income in 1988. The remaining 79 operational organisations remained at approximately the same level of income. Some indeed wished to remain small.

Of the 46 with an increased income the income bands were, by 1997, as follows:

income	n o.
up to £20,000	8
£20,000 - 50,000	12
£50,000 - 100,000	14
over £100,000	12

Those with an income of over £100,000 included the seven organisations which had no income 10 years previously.

PROFILES

MORDEN LITTLE LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB

Morden Little League Football Club has been in existence since 1968. The League exists to provide children of school age with facilities for recreation and other leisure time activities. In 1988 when the League approached the Trust for a grant it was providing free football for 300 boys. The League was run entirely by volunteers. The expansion of the League had been such that a computer was required and a grant of £1,276 was made by the Trust for London to enable the purchase of a computer, printer and software.

Ten years later 515 children are now involved in the League including several girls football teams. The children who take part can join at the age of seven and can continue until they are 13. Involvement in the League helps them to become good citizens and encourages them to develop as individuals. They are taught how to win and to accept defeat. As children grow up and leave many tend to come back as volunteers and some have even introduced their own children to the League.

From being the first Little League in the country, the Morden group has seen the development of 20 others in London and a further 20 in the Midlands.

The Chairman, Geoff Watson, who has been involved with the League for 18 years says that his involvement has been immensely enjoyable. It is not a job, it is part of his social life and the League is a network of friends. Through membership of the League, both adults and children can gain self-esteem.

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of organisations funded by the City Parochial Foundation in 1988 found that 91 per cent were still active but these organisations generally were larger, more securely funded and longer established.

Registered charities

In 1988 only 37 of the 184 organisations were registered charities. By 1997, 98 were registered. Registering as a charity is for many of these groups a sign of confidence and belief in the continuity of their organisations.

Newness of organisation: 141 of the

The organisations which grew were often involved in the areas of homelessness and community care. During the past 10 years, these areas received substantial funding from central government. Growth, however, had not led to changes in ethos.

Organisations remained committed to their clients and a variety of mechanisms were established to accommodate the views of clients.

Achievements: Just over half the organisations reported significant achievements since 1988, including new premises, increased staffing and service provision, statutory grants, successful campaigns and increases in clients numbers.

Detailed study of 27 organisations

A more detailed study was made of a sample of 27 of the funded bodies known to be still operational, and which represented the priority funding categories of 1988. Some of the important findings to emerge from this study were:

- During the previous 10 years the organisations had expanded their activities, increased their income and diversified their sources of finance. Some had become major players in their field of specialisation at the level of the borough and beyond. Others had remained small.
- All 27 organisations in the sample were started by either one individual or a group of volunteers who were committed to improving the life of a particular group of people, or campaigning on behalf of a particular sector of society whom they believe should have a voice.
- 18 out of the 27 organisations in the sample were membership based organisations run by the members, and nine were non-membership based which are professionally led and in some sense independent of membership control. All organisations made extensive use of volunteers.
- In 23 out of the 27 organisations

founders had remained an influence either as members of the management committees or they had become paid workers. Some committee members had been with organisations for at least 10 years, and two chairs had been with the groups for 25 and 18 years respectively.

- The average length of time that staff had remained with their organisation was between 4 and 7 years. This indicates considerable stability and contradicts the often expressed view that membership support organisations are vulnerable to changes in staff and management.
- 20 of the 27 had started since 1983. Only 3 groups were older than 10 years.
- In 1988 14 out of 27 organisations were registered as charities, in 1997 this had increased to 26.
- In 1988 6 out of 27 organisations had paid staff. In 1997 20 organisations had paid staff.
- The income levels had increased substantially as indicated below.

Income	Nos in 1988	Nos in 1997
No income	1	1
Under £20,000	22	5
£20,000 to 50,000	3	1
£50,000 to 100,000	1	10
Over £100,000	0	10
	<hr/> 27 <hr/>	<hr/> 27 <hr/>

Maintaining the same level of funding consumes a lot of workers' time and can be a real struggle. One project leader described the situation like that of a submarine which submerges into the sea, then surfaces and then submerges again and so on.

Women's groups and Black and Minority Ethnic Groups

Seven out of the 27 organisations in the sample are led and managed by women. In one case two active black women, who

ran a housing association, were also involved in two other organisations which catered for children and families. Furthermore, women managed seven other organisations which were involved with drug abuse, homelessness and carers. These were among the largest organisations in the sample. However, women's organisations were in general under-funded.

These seven women's organisations employed seven full-time and 11 part-time workers. They were involved in the provision of training, campaigning, widening state provision for women and running mother tongue classes for children to maintain their cultural heritage and to assist children to overcome under-achievement. Empowerment was a key factor for women's groups.

13 out of the 27 organisations in the sample were managed by black and minority ethnic community groups. These include a multi-million pound housing association and a sheltered accommodation scheme for black elderly people, mother tongue and supplementary schools, and a Muslim organisation providing bereavement and funeral services for its community. These organisations employed 29 full-time and 23 part-time staff.

The activities reflected a very positive image of members of black and minority ethnic communities.

The organisations' members demonstrated a level of entrepreneurship and

dynamism which can too easily go unrecognised. The men and women who were involved in this work put much of their personal time and resources into serving their communities which they believed did not receive adequate support from mainstream sources of help.

Conclusions

Long-term follow-ups such as this survey are rare. Few charitable trusts have looked at organisations funded a decade ago in order to see how they fared during these very difficult times. These findings indicate that the Trust was central in assisting this hidden and often neglected segment of the voluntary sector.

It was rewarding to discover that the great majority of the funded organisations were still in existence, and that the initial support provided by the Trust for London was instrumental in putting many of them on the right course. Many have flourished and grown. This has been particularly true of the organisations involved in homelessness, drug abuse and community care. These areas of work had received central government funding.

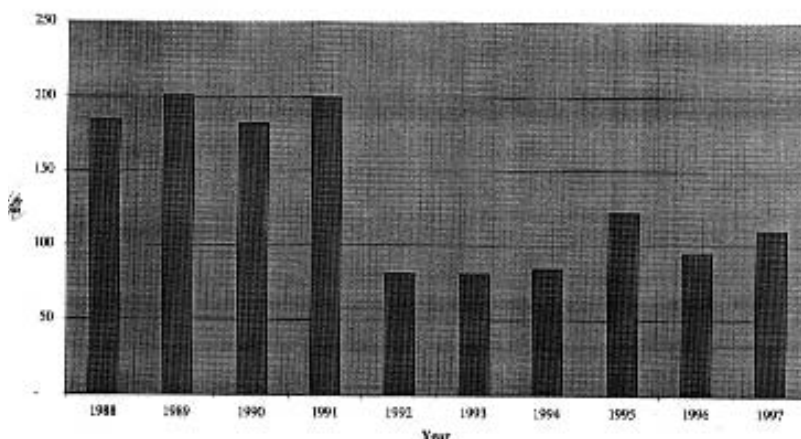
Others, and these formed the largest majority of the organisations, have remained small and have not wished to grow. Those which ceased operations did so for a variety of reasons. Lack of funding was not the only one although it was important for some organisations.

Most of the organisations were based on membership where clients played a central role. But even where membership had little sway, organisations took serious initiatives to involve their clients in the way services were delivered. Growth did not lead to changes in an organisation's ethos.

An important finding has been the key roles played by women and members of the black and minority ethnic communities. The indications are that there is a great deal of commitment and dynamism within these communities, and appropriate support could make a huge difference.

One other surprise was that the people who were involved in setting up these

Number of grants 1988-1997





The Family Support Group for relatives and drug users (Community Drug Helpline)

The Community Drug Helpline works in Merton and Sutton. Since 1988 it has grown from an organisation with no staff and a small income to one with a total of six full and part-time staff offering a wide range of services to drug users and their relatives.

organisations still remained an influence 10 years on.

The lessons from this study indicate that despite the efforts made by ordinary people to help themselves and others who are disadvantaged, such efforts are not recognised and are not matched by external support. The sector still remains isolated and neglected.

In general these organisations are not linked to support agencies and thus lack the opportunity to network, which is essential to acquire funding and build capacity. The Trust's experience with the Small Groups Worker scheme indicated the value of resourcing groups and addressing their needs. The availability of support can break an organisation's isolation and enhance its capacity to improve its management and service delivery to its clients.

Finally there is a frequently expressed view that small organisations are not

effective, that they are subject to instability and that their work has limited impact. The present study, which of course cannot claim to be representative, indicates this is may well be a myth.

The findings suggest that small organisations provide very valuable services to their beneficiaries, and that they are best placed to meet such needs because they are closer to their clients and reflect their aspirations. As for the question of wider impact, this should not be an issue; because of the very nature of small organisations, their concern remains local which is where they can and do make a difference.

The staff and the Trustees believe that such small organisations deserve all the support that can realistically be given, and they deeply regret that the original Trust endowment provided from the residual assets of the GLC was only half of what was originally promised.

More information

A detailed account of the operation and success of the Small Groups Worker scheme is to be found in a special report *Voluntary groups: helping them develop*, published by the Trust for London.

Further information on recent and planned funding by the Trust for London (and the City Parochial Foundation) can be found in *Grants Review 1996*.

Voluntary groups: helping them develop

A report on the small Groups Worker Scheme

Available from Trust for London price £5.



IBSN 1 901373 00 2

Grants Review 1996

Available from City Parochial Foundation, free.

