



Learning about our **impact**



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We are committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need.

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Learning about our impact

The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) is a major distributor of Lottery funding. In 2011/12 we received over 23,500 applications and made over 12,000 grants, with a total value of £768.8 million. Our mission is to bring real improvements to communities and to the lives of people most in need. We recognise that our funding has an impact on the voluntary and community sector, which delivers most of the projects we fund, and the people who take part in them.

We strive to maximise the impact of our funding, and to continuously improve our understanding of how best to do this.

'Learning about our impact' highlights the key findings from a range of activities and initiatives from 2011/12 that demonstrate learning and impact from our work. These are framed in the context of the four priorities set out in '[Fresh Thinking](#)', our updated strategic framework:

- building partnerships and facilitating collaboration
- focusing on those most in need
- involving people and communities
- building stronger organisations.

In addition to this we have focused on two areas of our work that have had a wide range of impacts this year:

- [health and well-being](#), and
- [children and young people](#).

Why focus on impact and learning?

Impact is important. We give out huge sums of money each year and we want it to be used to achieve the best possible outcomes. Across all of our work, we want to understand what works well – and support more of it – but also to learn from things that go less well. We aim to share this learning among our own staff, among grant-holders and applicants, and with other external partners.

We recognise that BIG can only contribute to impact by working through others who use our funding to run projects. But we want to understand how our selection and design of programmes and the way we fund can add value to that work, and ultimately how our approach affects how much difference projects make for beneficiaries.

This publication does not seek to aggregate the impacts achieved by those we fund. Instead it traces examples of learning and change arising from our work. We hope that this will help all involved to understand our impact.

We welcome your [feedback and comments](#) on our work.

Section 1: How we think about impact

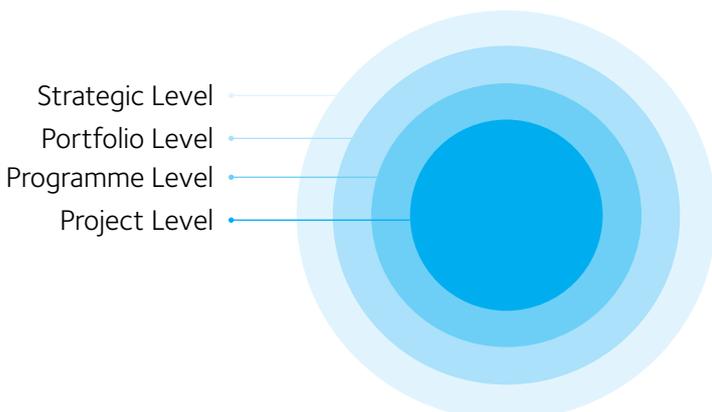
We define impact as any effects arising from an intervention. This includes immediate short-term outcomes as well as broader and longer-term effects. These can be positive or negative, planned or unforeseen. This means that 'impact' can be wide-ranging and subtle. It is rarely easy to see just how and when a particular activity or product leads to a specific impact. Often, different factors combine to lead to an impact over time, so it can be hard to prove that a particular activity or intervention has led directly to a particular impact.

Our funding supports a large number of organisations in different ways. We and the groups we fund try to bring about many different types of change to make real improvements to communities and to the lives of people most in need.

At BIG, we believe that research, learning and evaluation are important because they help us to understand and maximise the impact of the funding we distribute. We particularly focus on:

- gathering evidence to inform our funding,
- investigating and communicating impact, and
- supporting learning for improved performance, practice and policy.

Within BIG, we think about four dimensions of impact:



► At **project** level, we encourage those we fund to self-evaluate and have funded support for applicants and grant-holders. Our guide '[Getting Funding and Planning Successful Projects](#)' provides general guidance to applicants, notably in setting and measuring outcomes. We ask grant holders to tell us about the outcomes and the lessons they have learnt. We adopt a proportionate approach, asking groups that receive bigger grants from us to tell us more about the impact of the work we have funded.

► We commission evaluations of **programmes** (or groups of programmes) where we feel that we could gather useful information, notably where the wider evidence base is weak. We have disseminated our learning by producing a broad range of good practice guides and factsheets relevant to specific types of intervention. Examples appear in the list of our publications in the annex.

We often lead the way in developing common impact measures, for example for projects working with children and young people and for health and well-being. (Find out more about those funding themes in sections 6 and 7.)

We carry out annual reviews of the effectiveness of each of our programmes. In this process, we review evidence about the programme's impact, management and the learning arising from it. The results of this process feed into future management and wider learning across BIG. Even so, understanding programme impact is challenging, not least because of the difficulty in aggregating data across a large number of diverse projects. We are currently responding to this by defining 'universal data' – that is, a small set of key statistics that we will ask all projects to provide. This will help us not only to provide comparative information between programmes, but also across all of our funding.

► Within BIG, we have taken our thinking a stage further on how the way we fund can enhance

impact. We have looked at whether [programmes should be delivered directly by BIG or by third-party partners with specific expertise](#). We have also looked at where we can achieve most impact through either replicating good delivery models or by encouraging innovation. References to 'portfolio level' in the diagram on page 4 refer to the collection of programmes run in each country. But coming up with systematic approaches to measuring this is difficult because of the variety of specific contexts, needs and opportunities, and the spread of programmes. Our Board has a role in overseeing the five country portfolios. They assess the balance between tightly focused programmes that address the needs of those who are most vulnerable in society, and broader programmes that benefit the wider community.

- ▶ At a **strategic** level, we recognise that we have a role in the discussion about impact and impact measurement. This isn't only about the direct impact of our funding – it's also about our decisions about how to fund, as well as how we influence wider social policy.

BIG's new policy directions highlight our role in this area – for instance, requiring us to explore innovative as well as tested approaches, and to share our learning. Our work on replication and innovation (see section 2) is one way that we are working to support this.

We are the largest funder of the voluntary and community sector after government, so the way that we fund inevitably affects the way many organisations in the sector work, which in turn will influence other funders. We believe that we can play an important part in helping the sector and other funders to measure, communicate and increase impact.

A study of BIG's wider policy impact (see box, right) highlights findings from a recent study that illustrate aspects of our impact on and beyond the voluntary and community sector.

In seeking evidence of our impact, it has been far easier to find information about the activities that happen at project and programme level, as this is where the focus of our grant management and programme evaluation has been so far.

Our wider impact

The [Third Sector Research Centre](#) has explored the wider effect that BIG and our predecessor organisations have had on the sector over the last fifteen years, noting how our relationship with the sector has evolved over time.

'Wherever there is money there is influence' is important because it shows that we have a range of wider effects on the voluntary and community sector. Here are some examples of our impact from the report:

- Our decisions to introduce full-cost recovery and a focus on outcomes have led to wider changes in funding practice.
- We've directly affected the existence and survival of a wide range of groups in various ways. For instance, our decision whether to fund a group or not can have a wider effect on how that group is seen by others.
- Three-quarters of groups surveyed for the study felt that applying to us had helped build their skills at bid-writing. Even a third of unsuccessful applicants agreed reported this.
- Many felt that our requirements for partnership working and user involvement have improved practice in these areas more widely.

Section 2: Maximising impact – building partnerships and facilitating collaboration

This section sets out some examples of how we seek to maximise our impact and reach by working with other funders, policy-makers and the wider voluntary and community sector.

Working closely with others is one of our strategic priorities. It helps us to co-ordinate our work and the impact of our funding with the wider funding and policy context at the same time as sharing learning and good practice. Examples include:

- BIG developed the [Intelligent Funding Forum \(IFF\)](#) in partnership with the [Association of Charitable Foundations](#). The IFF provides opportunities for shared learning and collaboration between UK funders, to foster positive changes in funding policy and practice. A recent output is [Funding the Future](#) – for funders who want to do more to promote environmental sustainability through their day-to-day funding practice.
- As part of the [Scotland Funders' Forum](#), we participated in a working group to harmonise reporting across funders and to make reporting more effective and less burdensome for all parties. Our Scotland directorate has put recommendations from the [report](#) into action.
- The [Inspiring Impact project](#) aims to improve the quality of impact measurement within VCS organisations, for instance by making tools and resources more accessible, and improving leadership and building on effective approaches within different subject areas. BIG is contributing funding and is working with other funders to help improve our collective practice in measuring impact.
- The [Alliance for Useful Evidence](#) is an open-access, virtual network and global community of individuals and organisations with a commitment to developing the evidence base to ensure decision making across public services draws upon the most effective approaches and solutions. BIG is one of the three funders of the initiative, which will also

challenge and support practitioners, policy-makers, funders and commissioners to use and demand better evidence.

- Our wider discussions have led us to develop Learning for Impact, a small grants programme that will support collaborative learning between VCS organisations.
- We have also funded the [Third Sector Research Centre](#) and the [British Library](#) to set up a single entry point for all research relating to the voluntary and community sector. [The Knowledge Portal](#) was launched in October 2011 and is fast becoming the leading library of published material on the VCS for use by researchers, policy-makers and others.
- We jointly supported the launch of a new website www.fundernetwork.org.uk to improve learning and knowledge-sharing among charitable funders. Six months after launch, the pilot site had over 300 users from 150 trusts and foundations.

Replication and innovation: putting learning into practice

In 2011/12 we moved ahead with our [replication and innovation](#) initiatives. This work ties learning and impact closely together with programme design and management. 'Replication' is about identifying approaches that have been proven to work and funding projects that use those methods, while 'innovation' tests new approaches (which may later be replicated). We have launched two major programmes:

- [Improving Futures](#) aims to help give children growing up in difficult circumstances across the UK the best start in life. Some families face multiple and complex problems that can affect their children's well-being and later life chances. Improving Futures supports partnerships that aim to provide more integrated support to these families. We also want to ensure that learning about what works is shared within and beyond the voluntary, community and statutory sectors. A detailed evaluation plan has been built in to support this. Read more about collaboration and Improving Futures in the box on the right.
- [Realising Ambition](#) replicates the very best proven interventions that help children and young people to reach their potential and avoid pathways into offending. In developing the programme we thoroughly reviewed evidence of what works best in this area. We used a set of Standards of Evidence to select 25 of the most rigorously proven interventions that we could replicate across the UK. We want Realising Ambition to help us learn more about what works – both to achieve better outcomes for young people and to make the replication process as effective as possible. We are doing this by running both an impact evaluation to assess the impact of the programme on the beneficiaries it will support, and a process evaluation that will help us understand how the replication model has worked. The impact

Improving Futures: collaboration for impact

We consulted and worked closely with a wide range of stakeholders to develop Improving Futures, BIG's £26 million programme to support families with multiple and complex needs.

This collaborative focus reflects the recommendations from [earlier work](#). Staff involved in the programme have actively worked with others to ensure wider co-ordination with other major programmes,

In particular, in England, the Department for Communities and Local Government's (CLG's) [Troubled Families](#) programme works with a similar target group to Improving Futures. It is adopting a payment-by-results model. We have worked closely with CLG to help ensure complementary approaches between the two funds, and in particular in their approach to evaluation so that we can jointly build the evidence base on what works for families with multiple and complex needs.

evaluation includes randomised control trials (or similar quasi-experimental evaluations) at four Realising Ambition projects, which will make a significant contribution to the evidence base.

Section 3: Maximising impact – focusing on people most in need

BIG's mission statement commits us to 'bring real improvements to communities, and to the lives of people most in need'.

But need is a complex topic. Much of our research and learning work involves helping BIG to understand need, as well as how we can most effectively fund and act to help tackle unmet needs. This is an underlying theme in most of our studies. In 2011/12 we published studies on the relationship between [rural isolation and need](#), and patterns of application and funding and their relation to [gender-based need](#), which inspired [further work](#) (See box on page 10).

We have also continued to discuss and build on earlier work on the nature and complexity of need in Britain today.

Perhaps our best-known response to need is making funding available to projects developed by voluntary and community groups through our open responsive programmes.

Addressing entrenched need

In recent years, our thinking about need has been influenced by the Young Foundation's [Sinking and Swimming](#), a major study that we helped to fund. This highlighted that there are apparent 'hidden' needs, often characterised by complex inter-relationships. The report advocated more holistic responses to these patterns of need and more attention to supporting people through difficult transitions, as well as a recognition of the varied and changing nature of needs and the value of prevention.

The final point has also become a wider area of discussion and debate, especially since the publication of [Graham Allen's review](#) of early intervention, which argued strongly that identifying and tackling causes of later disadvantage was likely to be more effective than dealing with the consequences in future years.

Early in 2012, we funded [The Wisdom of Prevention](#), a conference organised by [nef](#) to consider how best to promote early action – helping people and communities prepare for and navigate times of

transition. We also commissioned [New Philanthropy Capital](#) to [review work and possibilities in this area](#).

Thinking about prevention, early intervention and the complexity of needs is increasingly informing our targeted programmes. For instance, [Improving Futures](#) (see section 2) explicitly focuses on helping to give children the best possible start in life.

By the end of 2011/12, BIG was also developing a range of programmes in England that would also reflect these priorities in meeting need. For instance:

- ▶ [Fulfilling lives: supporting people with multiple and complex needs](#) aims to help co-ordinate services for people who have reached crisis point.
- ▶ [Fulfilling lives: a better start](#) complements the work being taken across the UK in [Improving Futures](#), focusing in particular on supporting social and emotional development, communication and language development, and nutrition.

Both of these programmes include thorough evaluation plans. Over the coming years we expect to see results from these studies that support the importance of holistic, joined-up approaches that, as well as the value of recognising and responding to individual difference.

In addition, [Improving Financial Confidence](#) aims to make a real difference to levels of financial exclusion among social housing residents in England. It responds to research that shows some particular crisis points for social housing residents and the challenges faced by young tenants. Again the programme involves an intensive evaluation plan that we hope will identify both effective ways of working in this area and the value of supporting such work to social landlords.

Reaching Communities in England and Northern Ireland

- ▶ The [joint evaluation](#) of these two open, responsive programmes showed how they have supported projects working in some of the most disadvantaged communities in England and Northern Ireland and with individuals most in need.
- ▶ Funding often supported less well-known issues or causes, such as projects working with suicide, sex workers, violence and torture.
- ▶ But it wasn't always plain sailing. Some projects faced challenges of dealing with high levels of demand or developing services that could respond flexibly to changing needs. Others found it difficult to engage with and reflect the views of their users.

While programmes like Reaching Communities can be effective at responding rapidly to needs identified by groups, the approach means that it can be hard for us to measure the impact of this work beyond project level. But as the evaluators noted:

“The nature of Reaching Communities with its open demand-led structure and fairly open grant size and length restrictions, will generally lead to a huge diversity of local projects doing ‘local good’ rather than innovative or bespoke interventions or strategic projects targeting highly problematic individuals.”

Some of the challenges of running open programmes have given us extra impetus to review and improve our own systems to help the groups we fund have more of an impact with their own work, for instance by encouraging them to undertake self-evaluation. We talk about this some more in section 5.

Awards for All

Over 77 per cent of all the grants we made (but only 10 per cent of total funding) in 2011/12 were through [Awards for All](#), our small grants programmes. As is the case with the ‘bigger’ open programmes, it is hard to quantify the impacts of small grants across a wide range of groups. But [‘Wherever there is money there is influence’](#) (see page 5) showed just how important the voluntary and community sector feel Awards for All to be. As participants in the study noted:

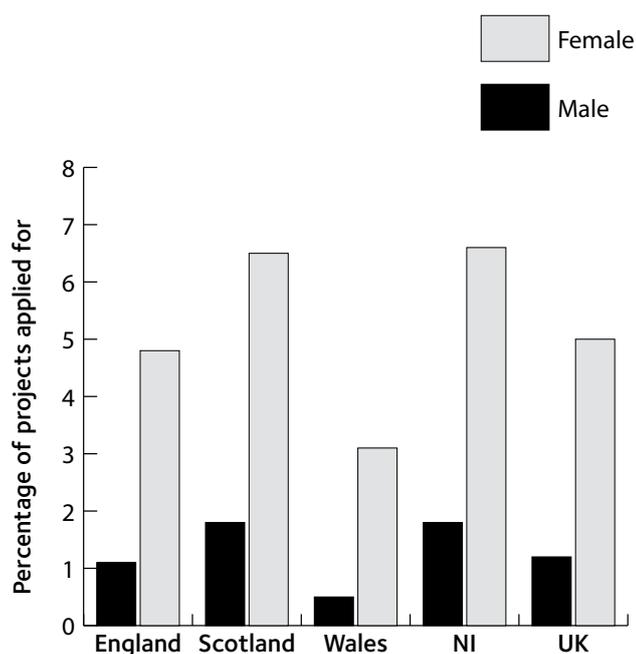
“The Awards for All programme... is a very bottom-up, non-strategic programme that I think has been change-making in the grass-roots sector because [it] is the one programme that allows people, small groups, to do what they want to do. Absolutely change-making stuff.

It wouldn't have been an intention of the Lottery but there's no question that an impact of [Awards for All] has been enhanced skills in certainly financial management and governance, at the appropriate level for groups that size.”

Our focus on impact leads us to consider a wider range of benefits and effects that Awards for All has at different levels – for beneficiaries of the projects we fund, for the groups we fund, and for the wider sector, notably smaller organisations.

Recently there has been wider discussion of 'below-the-radar' groups that are not necessarily linked into local networks and are therefore excluded from applying to most funding sources. Our programmes – and especially Awards for All – reach many groups that other funders will not consider.

Percentage of gender-targeted applications by country, 2008-2010



Equality and need: meeting the needs of men

Promoting equality and fairness are at the centre of our work. We undertake reviews of the information we have about who projects are targeting and who is using those projects. We publish an overview of this review in the [annual report](#).

Last year we reviewed figures about gender more closely. This revealed that we received five times as many applications for projects targeting women than those targeting men (See graph). We also knew that many projects reported finding it harder to involve men than women.

So we reviewed some of the needs that affect men more severely, factors that led to lower male involvement in social projects and how some groups have managed to overcome those barriers. In addition we produced a good practice guide for groups that want to do more to attract men.

The study has a particular significance – it helps us to demonstrate that 'equalities' isn't just about promoting the perspectives of particular 'protected' groups; rather we highlight that equalities and need are relevant to everyone.

Section 4: Maximising learning – involving people and communities

One of the main aims of BIG's funding has been to support communities to identify and promote what is important to them. We have enabled communities to manage and own assets (such as buildings, land and other spaces) which allow wider community development to happen.

In 2011/12 we published a series of reports and reviews about [our work in supporting groups to take charge of assets for wider community benefit](#).

We also endowed [the Local Trust](#) to run a major and innovative programme on our behalf – the [Big Local](#) programme, which itself was directly inspired by learning from the continuing [Fair Share Trust](#).

This section discusses those initiatives in further detail.

Buildings and other assets

As a funder, BIG and its predecessors have a long history of supporting community-based capital and asset transfer projects. The New Opportunities Fund's [Scottish Land Fund](#) was the first high-profile community asset transfer programme in the UK; it has inspired further programmes supported by BIG, as well as by other funders.

In 2011 we published a study that looked at [how best to sustain the benefits of capital funding](#), as well as a number of [internal reviews of our wider learning to date](#). The researchers surveyed over 1600 capital projects that we had funded. We found that many of our studies were reporting similar challenges, particularly regarding the need for both grant-holders and funders to think about future funding and operation rather than just the capital stage itself. So we produced a short, two-page document highlighting [main learning points](#) for funders and policy-makers on one side, and for communities and groups on the other. The document has been welcomed by community development workers and civil servants for highlighting essential underlying considerations in what can be a complex field – and being explicit about differing perspectives.

Capital and asset programmes: Some of the main messages from our learning

- Taking on an asset is only the beginning of a long-term process.
- Funders should be clear from the outset about their expectations for future funding.
- VCS groups need to understand why they want to take on the asset – and the changes that doing this will have to the way they work.

Because many outcomes tend to emerge after funding of capital projects ends and projects aren't always sure how to follow up and track progress, the evaluators of the [Community Assets programme](#) (which we ran on behalf of the [Office for Civil Society](#)) produced a [Legacy Impact Tool](#). This allows projects funded through Community Assets to track progress towards outcomes in a consistent and comparable way. The Office for Civil Society has encouraged us to make the tool more widely available across the sector, work that programme staff are now undertaking.

Big Local: building on learning

Our biggest grant to date – £200 million – has endowed [the Local Trust](#) to develop and run the [Big Local programme](#), which will fund and support up to 150 small communities in England to make changes that are important to them. At the same time the programme will develop residents' skills and confidence in doing this.

Big Local is a very strong example of our learning in practice. It builds directly on learning from the continuing [Fair Share Trust](#). That initiative and the communities where it operates have torn up much familiar practice in area-based initiatives. Decisions were effectively delegated to communities and there were no central targets for spending or outputs. The Trust helped to build communities' skills and confidence, and although it often took some time, real improvements have been made in Fair Share Trust areas, as our evaluation has demonstrated.

Applying learning in Big Local

Here are some examples of how Local Trust and the Big Lottery Fund have built learning into the Big Local programme.

- ▶ Some of the outcomes are of more interest to residents, and some to funders and policy-makers. The programme is open about this.
- ▶ A Trust can offer residents freedom from bureaucratic deadlines and targets, letting them learn and focus on making the changes they've identified.
- ▶ Longer-term funding can help to engage more residents and help them to learn. So can providing a guaranteed pot of money. Endowing a Trust for ten years allows this to happen.
- ▶ Communities differ in their circumstances, so all involved need to be wary about making simplistic comparisons about progress. Big Local is open about the need for each community to develop its own approach and priorities.
- ▶ It's better to talk about 'residents' than about communities – this reinforces that the programme is for people, not institutions, and the Local Trust is careful to reflect this in the language they use.
- ▶ A good programme of communication with residents is essential for success.

Other community initiatives

More widely, many of our programmes and approaches emphasise the value and benefits of working closely with communities. Here are a few brief examples:

- ▶ [Our Place](#) in Scotland focuses funding to areas that have missed out in the past; we are reviewing learning from the first phase of the programme in order to do this more effectively in future.
- ▶ [Village SOS](#) has given us an opportunity to test new ways of working, in this case with a broadcaster. The series of programmes helped to raise the profile of BIG, the communities involved, rural deprivation and potential responses to it. The BBC series and the evaluation of Village SOS also showed how priorities can easily conflict – perhaps most notably between building a sustainable business and focusing on community aspirations.
- ▶ Our Community Libraries programme in England helped turn 77 libraries in England into successful community hubs – and [its evaluation](#) has informed [the Arts Council's Future Libraries programme](#).

Section 5: Maximising learning – building stronger organisations

The relationship between BIG and the voluntary and community sector is central to our approach to funding, as exemplified by our commitment to ensuring that at least 80% of our funding goes to VCS groups. Decisions we make about how to fund have a wider effect on the sector.

This section highlights how BIG has contributed to thinking in this area, and in particular how thinking more creatively about organisational development has encouraged us to focus increasingly on more innovative approaches that will help organisations to become more resilient in the face of wider challenges.

Rethinking approaches to supporting organisational development

The wider economic situation and spending cuts have brought new pressures to the sector, perhaps most notably in the area of capacity-building. While this has long been an area of debate, the current economic and policy context has made reconsidering and re-prioritising approaches to organisational development more pressing.

We had earlier launched [a series of studies in the area of capacity-building](#) that foreshadowed some of the emerging debates. These studies found widespread support for much of the work that infrastructure agencies are doing, but had noted some areas for further consideration. These included the following:

- The role of specialist agencies can be confusing. While they are clearly well-placed to represent, advocate for and encourage networking among their members, do they also need to provide basic organisational development work?
- How we offer support will depend partly on what we see as the purpose, but also the preferences of the groups we work with. There was widespread interest in supporting groups to buy their own support.

In our publication [New tools for a new world](#) Professor Diana Leat challenged some of the entrenched approaches to thinking about the concept of capacity-building and its delivery. She argued that if the fundamental purpose of capacity-building is to meet social need more effectively:

- funders and voluntary and community groups might usefully think about systems rather than simply sectors;
- there would be value in moving beyond the familiar focus on capacity-building to wider ideas, like organisational resilience and combining existing resources in new ways; and
- funders could do more to exploit their own capacity to add value, for instance in the form of knowledge, overview and voice.

This programme of research and review has co-incided with wider discussion of the role of the voluntary sector and support given to it. Our studies have helped to shape thinking and have influenced responses in the UK and abroad.

Some of our own responses have been simple, but may well have a profound effect in the longer term:

- ▶ Our application guidance now explicitly highlights the fact that applicants can ask for support for their organisational development needs.
- ▶ We have improved internal guidance about when to use and what to include in the contracts we commission to support our applicants and grant-holders.
- ▶ We continue to promote transparency and the use of plain English – not least in talking about ‘building skills and confidence’ rather than ‘capacity-building’.

In England, our learning and discussion helped to shape [the Office for Civil Society’s consultation on the future of capacity-building](#) that led in turn to the launch of [the Transforming Local Infrastructure programme](#), which BIG is delivering on behalf of the OCS.

BIG has also reviewed the way it supports organisational development in England, as summed up in the 'Building Capabilities for Impact and Learning' strategy. Some of the main features of England's approach appear in the box below.

- ▶ Supporting Change offers further funding to projects about to end. It gives them an opportunity to review their performance and to make themselves and their achievements more sustainable.
- ▶ Assist, run by NCVO, will help infrastructure agencies to improve the quality of the services they offer and to adapt to the new focus. It includes a strong element of peer-to-peer support, and will also establish an online menu of support services.
- ▶ The Business Connectors project will build the skills and confidence of voluntary organisations through brokered relationships with local private companies.
- ▶ Big Local offers residents and groups long-term support not only to take action, but also to build skills and confidence to do so.

Learning about social investment

One of the approaches that best typifies newer thinking about supporting effective organisational resilience is the area of social investment. BIG co-funded the UK payment-by-results [pilot of the Social Impact Bond at Peterborough Prison](#). Our work in this area also fits with BIG's wider priority – as set out in the updated strategic plan – to engage with and enlist the support of the private sector.

Although there has been wide policy interest in social investment, its success will depend on attracting investors who wish to generate social and financial returns. So, in conjunction with the [City of London](#) and the [City Bridge Trust](#), we commissioned a study into [Investor Perspectives on Social Enterprise Financing](#), which highlighted the importance to investors of reasonable rates of return, mitigated risk and proof of effectiveness.

Learning from that study informed the shape of the [Next Steps](#) programme in England, which explicitly sets out to support and explore the potential of social investment approaches in responding to need.

The investor perspective is one side of the picture. To help groups adapt and respond to the new possibilities offered by social investment, we commissioned a report into '[investment readiness](#)', which presents and compares the points of view of the three main parties (potential investors, groups interested in receiving investment and intermediaries who do or might provide support).

Our work in this area was expanding rapidly by the end of 2011/12, with the development of a range of new initiatives across the UK and strong collaboration between BIG and the Office for Civil Society, notably on the latter's [Investment Readiness Programme](#).

Section 6: Learning from Well-being

This is the first of two sections where we look in more detail at different types of impact arising from specific funding programmes.

First, we look at our [Well-being programme in England](#). This programme has been supported by the most comprehensive evaluation of well-being in the UK so far, a study that has developed standardised measures to find out about the impact of our investment on beneficiaries over time.

The Well-being programme has provided £160 million to fund 17 portfolio partnerships in England. These portfolios in turn manage a set of projects that promote well-being, focusing on the areas of mental health, healthy eating and physical activity.

Impact for beneficiaries

A crucial part of [the evaluation](#) has involved asking participants about their well-being at the beginning and end of their involvement in a project, and doing so again three months later.

The [third report from the evaluation](#) of the programme found some real and measurable improvements for people who had taken part in projects, including:

- The number of people meeting the five-a-day target for eating fruit and vegetables has increased by 7 percentage points.
- People are more active and undertaking exercise on a regular basis. Participants have also said that they are enjoying exercising more.
- There has been a reduction of 10 percentage points in the number of adults reporting depressive symptoms, rising to a reduction of 14 percentage points among people aged 65 or over.
- There has been a significant increase in life satisfaction scores among adults – from 6.3 to 7 on a 10-point scale.
- There have been social benefits as well as individual improvements in well-being: more people are taking part in activities in their local area and feeling they belong to their neighbourhood.

Learning points for programmes and practice

The Well-being programme emphasises the importance of sharing learning – both through publicising and promoting findings and by bringing projects together to share their experiences. Some of the main wider learning points include:

- ▶ Different aspects of well-being affect each other.
- ▶ Holistic approaches have better results.
- ▶ Similarly, projects that support participants to ‘take home’ new approaches can benefit both participants and their families.
- ▶ Changing the way people plan and shop for food is important, but takes a long time to achieve.
- ▶ Volunteering itself can improve people’s well-being.

Wider influence and impact

A concrete result of the demonstrated success of the Well-being programme has been the agreement of other funders to continue or develop the work that we have funded. These include:

- Time to Change, which is already the biggest voluntary sector initiative in mental health, will be supported by the Department of Health and Comic Relief.
- The Greater London Authority will support another phase of Well London, which provides integrated and locally focused projects.
- As well as offering support to help sustain projects that the Activate London portfolio funded, the Peabody Trust is incorporating well-being work into its community development strategy.

Wider strategic impact: sharing learning on national well-being measures

A significant impact from this successful programme has arisen from the evaluation itself – and in particular our development of indicators to measure well-being.

When we set up the programme, we wanted to be able to measure overall changes, but also to help the portfolios we funded to demonstrate their own success. We were struck by the absence of relevant measures and commissioned the [New Economics Foundation](#) to develop some for us. The results reported above have used these measures.

We are pleased with the Government's interest in this area and have contributed to wider debate and discussion about how we can reliably and objectively measure such subjective concepts. (The short answer is to ask people how they feel.)

Anecdotally, the use and discussion of these standardised measures have aroused wider interest in their use. We have received an increasing number of requests from researchers who are considering using them.

Section 7: Children and young people – harnessing our learning

This section focuses on another theme in our work – [supporting children and young people](#).

It considers the impact of two programmes that ended in 2011/12.

Our [Children's Play programme](#) committed £123 million between 2006 and 2012 to create, improve and develop free local play spaces in England. One of our main concerns was to promote the 'three frees': free of charge; free to choose; free to come and go. The programme supported 1,466 individual play projects. It was also notable for promoting the concept of riskier play activities.

Our [Young People's Fund](#) invested £200 million in over 1,000 projects across the UK. The programme aimed to improve the lives of young people and engage them in key decisions about every stage of a project. Across the UK, about 700,000 young people took part in projects that aimed, among other things, to improve young people's confidence, well-being and engagement in the economy and wider society.

Some main learning points from Young People's Fund and Children's Play

- ▶ Providing young people with the opportunity to engage in the design and delivery of projects brings multiple benefits and is an effective mechanism for ensuring that activities are tailored to meet participants' needs.
- ▶ Simply bringing young people together to take part in positive activities where they can meet new people with a shared interest or experiencing similar challenges can benefit them.
- ▶ Peer recruitment and word of mouth have been effective in engaging harder-to-reach young people. Vulnerable and marginalised young people are more likely to trust their peer group as a source of information and advice than they are adults.
- ▶ The evaluations highlighted some gaps: common indicator measures across projects for young people and good practice guidance in the children's play sector.
- ▶ Free play helps children to be more confident, independent, able to express themselves and to get along with children from different backgrounds.

Wider influence

- ▶ Learning from Young People's Fund led to the development of [seven good practice guides](#), focusing on different themes and providing clear practical examples for projects working with young people. These guides have proven very popular and have been distributed to all projects funded under YPF and to stakeholders in the youth sector – they have also been our most downloaded publications for most of the year.
- ▶ The Children's Play evaluation had noted a gap in good practice guidance in the children's play sector, so we published a set of thematic case studies that explored and illustrated learning from the programme.
- ▶ Involving young people in designing play opportunities gave them a greater sense of ownership of what was provided.
- ▶ Encouraging a range of agencies to work together led to a wider range of young people who used Children's Play facilities, notably among those who had not done so before.
- ▶ Play workers became more comfortable with the concept of risky play, while parents became more confident about children's ability to take more risks in play and elsewhere.

Our experiences of funding projects for young people have since influenced BIG's policy and practice in three main ways.

1. BIG has involved young people earlier in the process and worked with 20 young people across England to co-design a new investment for young people, [Youth in Focus](#).
2. We have developed further programmes for young people, including [Reaching Out: Empowering Young People](#) in Northern Ireland and [the Life Changes Trust](#) and [Young Start](#) in Scotland.
3. We have continued to highlight the question of how we might better involve beneficiaries in the

design of our funding programmes. This also reflects a general move towards greater consumer and user power.

Wider strategic impact

- ▶ Children's Play has highlighted to local authorities the importance of actively engaging young people in developing play strategies.
- ▶ It also put more impetus behind proposals for funding free play than would have otherwise been the case. This has proved particularly important at a time when much wider spending on play has been reduced.
- ▶ The evaluators suggested that our investment in Children's Play contributed towards a 7.7 percentage point improvement in children's satisfaction with parks and play areas, as measured through the National Indicator (NI199) in 2009/10.
- ▶ The need for common measures highlighted by the Young People's Fund evaluation has led to wider debate and has our approach to measuring across youth programmes. BIG is now working with approximately 20 cross-sector partners on exploring common indicators for projects working with young people.

Annex: Research publications from 2011/12

All of the following publications are available on our website, www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

They are listed under the broad learning themes we use to categorise our work.

Better funding

BIG as a policy actor: briefing paper, scoping and full reports

A study of our wider impact on the voluntary and community sector.

Supporting collaboration and partnerships in a changing context

How we might best support groups to set up and run partnerships and other collaborative working arrangements.

Applicants' experience of the BIG outcomes approach

Experiences of working with SMART outcomes and how we could improve our approach.

Building skills and confidence

Funding adviser report and summary

A review of how funding advisers in England support BIG and applicants.

New tools for a new world

An essay that considers how funders and the sector think about their role and that of capacity-building, as well as some radical new ways of thinking about and responding to need.

Children and young people

Young People's Fund: final evaluation report and summary

Young People's Fund: case studies

Seven guides to good practice in working with young people

Children's Play: final evaluation report

Environment

Sustainable Communities factsheet

Health and well-being

Well-being evaluation: report and research summary

Progress and findings.

The Character Inquiry

A study co-funded by BIG that considered the relationship between character and well-being.

Identifying and meeting need

People and Places: third evaluation report and summary

Updates from the evaluation of our open, responsive programme in Wales.

Gender-based need

Some statistical findings about application and award rates for projects relevant to gender-based need.

Reducing rural isolation

Factors that contribute to rural isolation and how BIG's funding in England and Scotland has helped to overcome it.

Reaching Communities (England and Northern Ireland): case studies

International

Impact of funding enterprise projects overseas

Social and economic impacts of business development and enterprise projects we've funded in developing countries.

Stronger communities

Community Assets: final report, case studies and further background

The final report from an asset transfer programme we ran on behalf of the Office for Civil Society in England.

Capital and asset transfer tips

A two-page document of essential tips for communities and groups, as well as funders and policy-makers

Sustaining the benefits of capital funding – report and research summary

The longer-term benefits of BIG's capital funding and factors that promote sustainable change.

Community Asset Transfer: process evaluation report

The background to an asset transfer programme funded jointly by BIG and the Welsh Government.

Growing Community Assets evaluation: phase 2 report

Factors for success in establishing and sustaining community ownership, as well as wider progress of the programme.

Managing and owning assets factsheet

Promoting community involvement factsheet