

# Why Community Foundations?

## Tackling important social issues

**Community foundations create a powerful community spirit that brings together all types of people to tackle important social issues in their area.**

### Why are community foundations able to tackle important social issues?

There are three fundamental elements to our approach:

- 1 Empowering people** – giving local people the funds, skills and confidence to put their ideas into practice. For example, The Birmingham Foundation supports a voluntary organisation that provides mentoring services to young people of African-Caribbean descent. The local residents sought funds to pay for personal development guidance and motivational speakers to set their young people an inspirational example because, in their words, *“what they see is what they’ll be”*.
- 2 Creating community cohesion** – bringing together divided and troubled communities to co-operate on solving their problems. For example, a large housing estate in Southwark is described in the media as *“hell’s waiting room”* where *“the new generation of drunks, junkies and muggers are growing up”*. But with the help of Capital Community Foundation, residents are tackling these problems by running after-school music groups, homework clubs and English lessons for parents.
- 3 Building social capital** – by forging links between donors, do-ers and other residents, a ‘web of relationships’ between different types of people is created and strengthened. Informal connections to other people are also known as ‘social capital’. Research shows that people and communities possessing a lot of social capital are stronger, healthier and happier.

### Who benefits from community foundation grant-making?

Everyone living in areas served by community foundations can benefit from their efforts to strengthen local communities and make a difference to the lives of local people. Reports on how grants are awarded demonstrate the amazing reach of community foundations. The range of beneficiaries includes:

Children *young people* families *the elderly* people with disabilities *lone parents* carers *unemployed people* ex-offenders *people with mental health*

### CASE STUDY

#### Working for inclusion

Together with other partners, the Community Foundation in Wales is challenging perceptions and creating new opportunities for people with disabilities. A new ‘Centre for Excellence’ is being established in Caerphilly, a priority issue for a panel of local people as many residents have health problems that affect their potential to work and enjoy daily life. The Centre includes services for the whole community, such a cyber café and recreational facilities, as well as providing advice, advocacy and specialist equipment for people with disability and their carers. A motability repair service and short stay accommodation for people using the Centre or the repair service are also planned.

The ambitious aims of the Centre are to build confidence, give a ‘voice’ and improve the overall wellbeing of disabled people while increasing wider understanding and awareness of the needs and aspirations of people with disabilities.

*issues* refugees *asylum seekers* drug users *victims of crime* minority ethnic communities.

### What types of social needs are met?

Funding from community foundations enables an enormous range of activities to take place. Some examples include:

Sports groups *playgroups* outings *social opportunities* arts & crafts *music and dance* counselling *advice* conservation and environmental projects *inter-generational activities* healthy living and after-school clubs.

### How do community foundations tackle important social issues?

Modest but effective grant-making based on empirical evidence is the proven route to success.

- ◆ Some undertake extensive research to identify the nature of local social needs, such as the Leeds report ‘Vision for Leeds’.

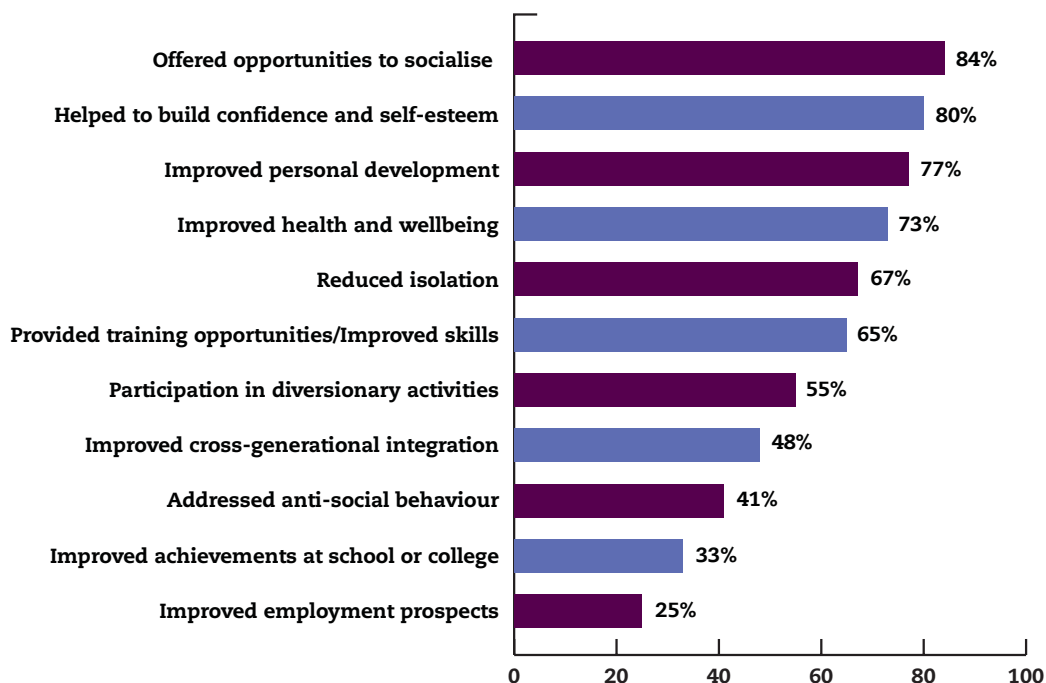
- ◆ Some fund projects that promote integration, like Kent Community Foundation's support for sailing for able-bodied and disabled children.
- ◆ Some support new ideas that tackle old problems, like Capital Community Foundation's funding of a contemporary dance group for older people, which challenges ageism, helps maintain physical capacity and promotes mental wellbeing.

### What difference do community foundations make?

More important than who benefits or what activities are funded, is the difference that these grants make to the lives of many people.

Research undertaken in summer 2006<sup>1</sup> identified the impressive range of benefits shown in the graph below.

#### What difference do community foundation grants make?



*“Community foundations allow donors and philanthropists to make a real difference locally where it matters. Through Community Foundation Network they can do so with confidence and assurance that a highly professional infrastructure exists to make best use of their generosity.”*

Lindsay Boswell, Chief Executive of the Institute of Fundraising



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Foundation  
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<sup>1</sup> Research was conducted by the Greater Manchester Community Foundation