

PLACE-BASED APPROACHES TO SYSTEMS CHANGE

Edited to remove references to individuals and organisations, other than ones Lankelly was funding at the time, as this information is already in the public domain.

I. Introduction

In October 2014 the Board discussed a paper on systems change¹ and agreed five areas for action:

1. Test how change methodologies can be used to shift multiple systems in whole localities.
2. Build a collectively held vision of a continually improving system.
3. Build a field of people capable of analysing, disrupting and reshaping systems.
4. Test the effectiveness of a range of change methodologies.
5. Build a network of decision makers willing to rethink and change systems.

In this paper we home in on objective 1: how we can shift multiple systems in whole localities, or 'place'. This has been a very difficult paper to write. The more we have got into this process, the more nuanced it becomes and the more we are faced with tensions to hold and questions to answer. Where these exist we have highlighted them. At present we don't have capacity and the reach to work beyond Scotland and England.

We are also mindful that we are in a period of internal transition and change. [We] continue to have a large number of grant relationships as well as developing this work. We see 2016/17, and possibly 2017/18 as transition years as become clearer about the contribution we can make to place based approaches.

In the paper, we set out:

- the context for this work
- the developmental work we have taken to inform our approach to place in England and Scotland.
- proposals for three different approaches to place-based approaches
- how we intend to learn as we undertake this work
- governance structures
- tensions
- a proposed budget.

¹ We define systems as a set of people, organisations, cultures, processes, relationships and actions which combine to make things happen. The things that happen are the result of the interaction of all the elements of the system: of interactions between the individual elements themselves; and also between individual elements and the system as a whole.

II. Context

What is increasingly clear is that there is a demand for us to work with voluntary and statutory players across whole areas as they rapidly adjust to the “new normal” they are facing [austerity]. This offers an opportunity for us to spread and test the learning from the range of activities we have supported over the past few years. It also means that people at all levels of the system are increasingly open to thinking radically about the structure and nature of support that is offered.

Systems thinking also tells us that if we want to create the conditions for change then we have to work at a whole system level with multiple players rather than funding one player in the hope that they have sufficient levers to bring about wider change. Systems are everywhere, and we are all players within systems, whether we like it or not. Given the interdependence of everyone within systems, place is a way of putting a boundary around systems and therefore giving a focus to our work. It is also a way of helping us to understand the tension between ‘communities of place’ and ‘communities of interest’ approaches where the majority of our resources are currently focused.

We have consulted widely on what our definition of place should be. It means very different things to different stakeholders depending on their individual and institutional drivers. People living in a place will define it very differently to a chief executive of a local authority. People have preferred us to talk about communities or human-centred systems as opposed to place-based systems change. People have also talked about the tension between communities of place and communities of interest/identity. People who face severe and multiple disadvantage, it is felt, will be more likely to identify with communities of interest despite also being resident within communities of place.

It seems that there is no agreed definition of place that we can use, however, we will need to draw boundaries around our work, whilst recognising that these will need to be permeable. We will work within pre-determined statutorily accepted definitions of place e.g. local authority. We will need to work at different scales within a place e.g. at a strategic level across the whole place, at a community level maybe more ward, or street level. The tension between communities of interest and communities of place is something that we will have to continually pay attention to.

Place-based approaches have their limits:

- some of the challenges still come from national Whitehall agendas. We will maintain a focus on some of these in other areas of our systems change work.
- the dynamics that exclude women and BAME groups.
- market entry barriers for social innovators. We’ll also work closely with [our social innovation team] to consider the system challenges social innovators are facing as well as the positive support models that they prototype.

III. Development work (March 2015-March 2016)

In the systems change paper, we said that we wanted to avoid getting trapped in the intervention/outcomes paradigm: where setting an outcome can draw all the focus to that outcome to the exclusion of what is truly needed. However, we also know that open-ended work can lose focus, and similarly miss what's truly needed. Our work on place therefore needs some anchors which can bring it back to purpose, help us to identify partners, and create a framework against which we can be held accountable. In consultation with many in this field, we have concluded that these anchors should be defined in terms of the values, principles, behaviours and skills that this work will require. We have also identified some of the methodologies that will need to be tested.

We have undertaken 7 strands of work many designed to be of wider “public benefit” in their own right but that are also developmental building blocks for any intervention in place that we decide to make. We have:

1. Worked with Toby Lowe at Newcastle University Business School² to hold a series of roundtable discussions with local authorities, systems thinkers, civil servants, people with lived experience and grant-funded partners across England to help us develop a manifesto which sets out the values, principles and behaviours which need to shape place-based systems change (draft statement attached at Appendix 1).
2. Commissioned IVAR to do an historical UK and international literature review of statutory and charitable approaches to place (interim findings attached at Appendix 2).
3. Co-funded IVAR to look at how foundations are approaching place-based work across the UK.
4. Together with Comic Relief, worked with the Association of Charitable Funders to set up a time-limited interest group for funders interested in place which includes UK, England-wide and Scottish funders and those based in a particular place.
5. Held a series of exploratory one-to-one meetings with other funders, statutory partners and other thinkers. Where these might lead to collaborations they are highlighted.
6. Funded Collaborate, New Local Government Network and CLES to test out different methodologies. Collaborate, for example, worked with Coventry to identify the pre-conditions for systems change required in place (report available on our [website](#)).
7. Continued to fund voluntary agencies taking place based approaches e.g. Civic Systems Lab, the Winch as they support a North Camden Promise Zone and Foundation for Families looking at place's responses to domestic violence.

IV. Purpose

² See a recent paper he has written <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/spol.12205/abstract>

We suggest that our overall purpose should be: **to support places to build the right systems conditions so that people facing severe social disadvantages can be part of the networks of support on which most of us rely.**

When considering our purpose a strong tension has emerged; whether we should have a focus directly on people who face severe social disadvantages (community of interest) and hope we can influence place from this starting point or start with local concerns and hope that they reach people who face severe and multiple disadvantage.

Work we have funded to date, Civic Systems Lab (wider focus on place) and Love Barrow Families (starting with families who face severe and multiple disadvantage), have taken these separate starting points and worked outwards. Both have shown that they have can influence, but also that they have their own limitations. If it were possible, it would seem that a combined focus is required within a place.

V. Theory of money

Sitting behind our purpose are a number of theories/assumptions about the value our resources (intellectual and financial) can add to place based approaches. They include:

- creating a neutral space through our independence
- leading not with actual money, but with support and capacity
- using money to unblock issues, to resource alternatives
- holding people to a collaborative and collective approach to change
- filling skills gaps in local areas
- shifting power so that people can be heard
- galvanising people, networks and ideas

The IVAR learning shows that we must initially offer non-financial resources, e.g. power to convene and independence, rather than “waving money around”. Previous examples show that money can create competition and/or suspicion within the community, as well as the risk of setting unrealistic expectations. We also don’t have the financial resources to make and sustain large enough investments to meet the shortfall in public spending.

VI. Timescales

All of the literature shows that this work needs to take place over the long term – the IVAR research shows that even 7-10 years is not long term when thinking about place. We therefore need to accept that in entering into place-based work we will need to commit for the long term e.g. 15 years plus.

And if we accept this, then planning for continuity becomes paramount. Almost the only two constants in this work will be those people who live in the places (and even here there will be turnover) and our financial resources. Everything else - our trustees and staff, external partners, the leadership, staff and organisations at a local level - is very likely to change. This means that we need to think creatively from the

outset about learning, succession planning (in a variety of formats), governance and accountability.

Whilst Lankelly Chase needs to commit to working on place-based approaches for the long term, trying to do more than anticipate the shape of this will commit us to a particular direction before the evidence supports it. Notwithstanding this note of caution, we have some clarity about the first year of the work and are confident that the learning about the processes and methods that facilitate place based systems change will evolve over the coming years.

VII. Three different place-based approaches

Through the IVAR review and in discussion with external partners, we have identified three different ways we could approach place based work:

1. leading work
2. supporting the work of other foundations/national agencies
3. supporting grantees who are taking place based approaches

By having this multi-faceted approach, we believe it offers us the chance to go both deep and wide simultaneously. It also allows us to learn without having to always lead the work.

1: leading work

As outlined above in the development work section, we've held a series of facilitated group discussions over the past 6 months. We wanted to develop a statement of intent which pulls together the learning from work we've funded as well as the work of others. In these conversations we've focused on some of the values, principles and behaviours that need to underpin place-based approaches. We outline this in-depth in Appendix one. The thinking that has emerged from these conversations has guided what is now set out.

Within this appendix we talk about two stages of systems change; understanding the system as a system and making the system work better. In this first year of our work we want to test out the statements outlined within these stages. Given our size and capacity, we also need to be realistic about the extent and nature of our involvement. We are thinking about our role in two ways: the direct involvement of [Lankelly]; and the way we use our resources.

Our **direct involvement** will include.

- initial discussions with local stakeholders
- agreeing the terms of our engagement based on our statement of intent in appendix one
- managing partnerships with intermediaries (see below)
- brokering their initial involvement with places
- supporting intermediaries to work well together/share learning between them

- sharing the learning nationally and with other places.

And **we will use our financial resources** in three ways:

1. To fund a number of intermediaries/brokers. This is likely to be where most of our money will go initially.
2. To have a small budget available to areas to unblock tricky issues, facilitate conversations, and level the playing field between stakeholders.
3. To support a Systems Changers programme in one area (to understand what value such a programme could add locally).

Intermediaries/brokers: Change must be driven and owned locally. But sometimes, for the right system conditions to emerge, areas need additional support.

Some of the skills that have been identified through the development phase include:

- Systems thinking, mapping and design
- Data analysis
- Finance
- Hearing and understanding the perspectives/drivers/pressures of different players
- Supporting the mechanics of changing systems e.g. decommissioning, action learning
- Bringing the voice of everyone in and building the capacity of those who struggle to engage (recognising that this can be a lengthy process in its own right)
- Different facilitation skills
- Supporting the emotional side of systems change as well as the more structural side.

We want to avoid becoming a delivery agent. Using intermediaries to 'hold up mirrors' to areas, and to bring additional skills has worked, as the IVAR paper demonstrates. However, too often the time that they are able to engage and support areas as they make their changes has been limited by short term funding.

What a long term approach means for how we work with intermediaries needs to be thought through with them, as we also need to give ourselves the ability to end partnerships. We've found through our funding that no one agency has all the skills required. As no one agency has all the skills and different places will respond to different methodologies we will need to build a "virtual team" of intermediaries. We may need a mix of relationships; some core funded, others spot funded, some full time posts, others part time, others demand-led. We have a number of relationships with potential people/organisations whom we've already funded and who we feel could become part of this virtual network.

Starting small and then building out: There's already quite a demand for our time from a number of LAs. However, we don't know if they are the right ones to work with, and there are already too many. We therefore need a process for choosing

which results in us dedicating our resources to the areas that will have most contribution to our overall goal.

Through our development work a number of the conditions/criteria that we need to see in places for us to work with them are already clear to us:

- Senior level buy-in and sponsorship – conceptual buy in and leadership to get things done (across local authority, police and aspects of health as well as voluntary sector)
- Evidence of significant severe and multiple disadvantage
- Key players with the right mindset – collective ownership of problems, prepared to take risks and strengths-based approach
- a shared belief in the values, principles and behaviours set out in appendix one;
- Sufficient diversity within the area e.g. building on intelligence from knowledge hub and women and girls research.

In this first year we will start in two areas. One of these areas will be [chosen] because of the partnership that has [already] developed [there], and another place. This could be areas where we have already had approaches from and have some pre-existing relationships.

To work through: Some of the questions that we need to resolve through this first year include;

- Have we identified the right values, principles, stages of systems change and behaviours as outlined in appendix one?
- How should we extend our approach to other areas? Are our pre-conditions for engagement right?
- How can we test whether the commitment to working with us in this way is actually present in an area as opposed to an initial expression of interest? And how we can ensure that this “testing” phase is of benefit to an area if the partnership progresses no further than this?
- What are the skills/methodologies/processes required to support areas to develop the right systems conditions?
- What are the barriers preventing this from happening?
- What shape should our support take in future?
- Is supporting intermediaries one of the approaches for us to take?
- Is our supposition that we need to focus first on building relationships/creating spaces/fostering different dialogues/building trust correct?
- How to work at different levels and with different players in place?
- What does equality of voice mean and how do you ensure it can happen?
- What role does community engagement play?
- How and when would we have a dignified exit from areas?

2: Supporting the work of other foundations/national agencies

By leading our work on place our resources, financial, intellectual and human will be limited. We risk being captured by our own thinking and those who agree with us. There are also a number of other players in the foundation, voluntary and public sectors who are also working through place based approaches. By collaborating with them it would enable us to extend our reach with minimal effort.

3: Supporting existing grantees who are taking place based approaches

We are already supporting some voluntary agencies who are taking place-based approaches, who are building local collaborations and who are thinking through whole system change. We will continue to support those who are working in this way.

VIII. Understanding the learning and impact of our work on place

IVAR's review notes that finding evidence of impact is incredibly difficult due to issues of time, context/external factors, attribution, cost and the difficulty of counting the things that really matter (relationships, confidence, trust, social capital, for example). It is also hard to find evidence of the processes that led to change. Therefore it becomes crucial to build evaluation and learning in from the outset. If we are also looking at different forms of accountability and defining next steps beyond the initial phases and areas, formal learning becomes essential to helping us achieve this.

There are four learning objectives:

1. To help us continually adapt and evolve our approach to place, to understand what is actually needed
2. To hold the way we and those we support to account against the "statement" of values, principles and behaviours in appendix one
3. To understand the value of this approach through change at an individual, organisational and system level in both mindsets, as well as processes
4. To create shareable insights, methodologies and end products

We propose commissioning an external learning partner who can use developmental evaluation/action learning approaches. ...Creating safe spaces and fostering dialogue can have tangible benefits to individuals, organisations and ultimately the system.

We are also talking to McConnell Foundation in Canada and others about how we could develop an international learning group across a small number of foundations focused on place based approaches.

Working with a learning partner

A learning partner is an individual or team working alongside the people and organisations designing, delivering or taking part in a programme. The learning partner is supportively challenging; direct but not directive; and enables those immediately involved in a programme to make informed decisions based on what they

are learning. In practice, 'working alongside' includes visiting regularly, acting as a sounding board, sense-making and facilitating group conversations. Sometimes it also includes some early capacity building support.

There are three primary responsibilities that a learning partner may hold: relationships (particularly important where developmental evaluation is used); technical support (for example, support with funding proposals, monitoring and evaluation advice, and facilitating peer learning); learning (supporting a programme to question, learn from and adapt their work in real time, the methods can include: one-to-one meetings with senior leaders to discuss strategic challenges, through to written briefings and reports, supported by facilitated workshops).

IX. Tensions

The deeper we have got into this work, the more key tensions have emerged between opposing but equally valid requirements and responses. Some of these aren't resolvable, but are inevitable ongoing tensions that we will need to keep under review.

Tension	Action to take in response
People valuing delivery as action vs need for reflection, dialogue etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National sponsorship that legitimises this approach • Permissions from managers to value dialogue & reflection, especially middle managers • Building trust
Length of time it will take for change to show vs need for results that matter to people facing severe and multiple disadvantage and system leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture and value small changes through the learning • Ensure that quick wins are identified on an on-going process to give tangible sense of purpose to those involved. • Understanding of the board that development of the relationships, establishing different "spaces" can take time • Reflection and dialogue are change, different type of conversations
Emergent nature of the work - not having clarity about next steps vs need for accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have 6 monthly sessions locally and nationally to adapt and review approach and forward look • Continuing to invest through social innovation in practice examples that will demonstrate service design that could occur • Continuing to invest in system architecture that could demonstrate change that could occur • Working with other partners to identify learning

	from their approaches
Personal/organisational agendas vs need for collective action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognising that this will happen ● Taking time to build shared understanding ● Using a systems coaching approach to help build this collective sense of purpose ● Building trust and cross sector alliances as part of the work
Duty of care (loneliness, isolation, burnout) vs need to take risks, work outside of comfort zone, be ambitious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coaching support ● Peer support ● Connection to other people ● Permission to stop and have headspace
Staff turnover (at Lankelly Chase, within brokers and locally) vs need for continuity over the long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Succession planning for brokers and Lankelly Chase staff ● Learning valuing informal as well as more formal knowledge/skills ● Viewing place as a system means multiple relationships will be developed, which should be more likely to bring multiple sponsors to the work. ● Developing skills that stay in the local area ● Connecting people locally
Reputational/scapegoating vs holding people to account and challenging poor practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Area methodology must make it clear there is no blame. All governance & accountability tools must do the same ● Each area to have terms of engagement with Lankelly Chase, that allow dignified exit ● Manifesto (tool for holding executive to account) makes it clear systems produce outcomes
Politics - big and small p (that historically relationships between organisations. individuals are strained, that the Councillors aren't engaged in the work, that Central Government makes changes to policy that impact, that we don't identify/aren't sensitive to this)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building legitimacy in the area ● Accepting that places are political ● Using mediating skills ● Fostering dialogue and having difficult conversations without blame ● Working with local authorities to ensure councillors are part of the conversation

Previous initiatives (these may have caused divisions, reduced people's appetite for risk, under delivered or caused consultation fatigue) vs learning from the past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on the manifesto as lynchpin for a different kind of conversation • Equality of voice - everyone has something to offer • Open feedback loops that link to learning
Need for an external catalyst vs. being seen as a London-based interloper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to make sure we involve people who aren't just based in London.
People see us as competitors vs. wanting us to take a lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being clear about our role • Encouraging open and closed opportunities for feedback
Clear imperative for change vs. fear of change and the instinctive responses to this e.g. blocking, negativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using systems thinking tools including psychology of change • open, honest and public feedback loops that show continual improvement • acknowledging that people will want to hold on to the things that are working, and need to find a way of doing this. • Building relationships based on trust • Making change quick, easy and fun • Explore and challenge local narratives • Allow space to air concerns; and adjust to new ideas

X. Governance and accountability

We need to think about governance and accountability in a variety of forms:

Board: We are keen that the Board should have on-going oversight of this work and believe that the best way for it to hold the work, and ultimately us, to account is to focus on how well the “manifesto” is being enacted and how our approach fits with this. We propose that a sub-group of the Board should be established to which we and our learning partner (see below) provide detailed updates, as well as an annual report back to board. This sub-group would also oversee the budget outlined below.

External oversight/influence: We also need to use external oversight as a mechanism to advise on change locally and share learning, as well as keeping us linked to wider work. We propose ...setting up an observers' group that brings in key thinkers/Whitehall/membership bodies to learn from and advise on our work. This would also provide an opportunity for us to be held to account by external stakeholders who have no financial interest in our work.

Local oversight: We also need to work out with local stakeholders how this work should be governed locally. The learning from IVAR and from discussions with others is that this will evolve as the work progresses, and should not be a one-off discussion. Often too much time can be spent on setting up formal structures that add little or can be a dead hand. We need to work out how the local community and other players can establish mutual accountability, particularly within democratically accountable structures.

XI. Budget

We want to use this first year to explore and reveal:

- the different roles we could play in place
- the methodologies and processes that should guide our work (e.g. intermediaries, skills required)
- how to identify further areas and what scale looks like for place based approaches
- who our partners are at a national level
- the resources required

As this work is exploratory it is hard to propose an exact budget and costings. We need to start working this way in order to fill in many blanks. We don't want to over ask for resources, but then we also don't want to find ourselves limited by budget midway through the year. One of the objectives for this year, and a deliverable by the end, is to establish the nature and scale of resources required.

Therefore, we ask the board to delegate approval of £1million envelope for 2016-17 to a sub group of trustees. We would then come to this sub group (via email/phone conference) to approve spend on chunks of money.

In terms of how we have reached the figure of £1million, we have estimated the following items of potential expenditure. This expenditure particularly applies to our work leading on place and collaborations with other funders.

[detailed budget set out]

XII. Decisions for board

We therefore ask the Board to:

- approve £100k to enable us to partner with X
- approve the initial approach to place set out here
- advise on your appetite for a long term approach
- approve the budget proposed for the first year
- delegate authority to a small group of trustees to work with executive to develop the approach, approve spend and oversee initial delivery

We will then return to the full Board at the end of this first year, with a framework for how to proceed.

Appendix one: Severe & Multiple Disadvantage: A paper for place based approaches

This paper was worked out in consultation and discussion with a wide range of stakeholders. It is still draft as we need to cross reference it with the new theory of change and we're currently sense checking it with people who have been involved in the discussions.

1. Systems and Place

The starting point for this manifesto is that the systems which support people who experience severe and multiple disadvantage are complex and rooted in particular places. These systems are not the same in Newcastle as they are in Blackpool, Cardiff or Glasgow. In each of these places, the systems have their own actors, culture and relationships. Our purpose is to build the capability of the whole system to tackle severe and multiple disadvantage.

2. This is what we believe about systems and place, and how systems which support people with severe and multiple disadvantage work

By pulling together existing thinking about systems and place, and testing these ideas in dialogue with a range of people, we have been able to identify our starting assumptions about systems and place. This is what we believe:

Definition

A system is a set of **people, organisations, cultures, processes, relationships and actions** which combine to make things happen. The things that happen are the result of the **interaction of all the elements of the system**: of interactions between the individual elements themselves; and also between individual elements and the system as a whole.

The things that happen as a result of such systems are not under the control of any one person or organisation within the system. (In technical terms, the results of such systems are '**emergent**'). Such a system is one in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Such systems include both professional people (those who are getting paid to design and deliver interventions) and civic society (people who live and act within places as volunteers).

Terminology:

We use the following terminology to describe different aspects of systems and place.

System Elements: The people and organisations in the system which enable the system to fulfil its purpose: e.g. community centres, support workers, volunteers, rehab services etc

System Infrastructure: The things that enable the system to function as a system: e.g. partnership meetings, multi-agency team-meetings, information systems etc

1: Systems produce outcomes (It is not organisations or projects that produce outcomes).

Systems, People and Purpose

2: People must feel that they belong to the systems of which they are part (We want people to talk about 'our system' not 'the system'.)

3: To make this real, everyone within such a system must have a voice about how the system works.

4: The purpose of such systems must be **to support the people within them to live the lives they would like to live.**

Systems Thinking and Systems Change

5: Systems thinking is a necessary tool for people who want to improve the lives of people with severe and multiple disadvantage.

Place and Boundaries

6: The scale and boundaries of 'places as systems' which support people with severe and multiple disadvantage must be drawn according to who is required to be part of the dialogue and action that fulfils the purpose of the system.

7: The scale and boundaries of 'places as systems' which support people with severe and multiple disadvantage must be continually reviewed and redrawn as things change.

Complexity, Uncertainty and Judgement-Making

8: Those who support people with severe and multiple disadvantage must be able to tolerate uncertainty and yet still make judgements about the best course of action.

Systems and Relationships

9: Building relationships is as much a supportive intervention for people with severe and multiple disadvantage as other 'projects'.

Systems Failure and Demand on Systems

10: The support that is offered to people with severe and multiple disadvantage must be designed to meet their particular needs, otherwise the system will create failure demand.

System Learning and Adaptation

11: Promoting learning and adaptation creates systems change. We must not use management processes which discourage learning.

4. Stages of system change: How we believe system change happens

These are the aspects of system change which we have uncovered from our search for evidence, and from the conversations we have initiated with those who undertake system change. In this manifesto, they appear in logical sequence. In real life,

systems change is unlikely to be this neat - actual systems change in many ways. However, we think this list serves as a reference for those seeking to create change.

Stage 1: Understanding a system as a system:

Element 1: Define a purpose for the system:

12: Systems are defined by their purpose.

13: People who are not part of the local system are helpful for facilitating conversations about purpose.

Element 2: Understand the relationships and infrastructure of the system

Understanding the journeys between elements of the system

14: Understand the journey between different elements of the system, from the perspective of those who face severe and multiple disadvantage

Understanding system infrastructure

15: Understand how the system infrastructure works – what are the mechanisms and relationships by which elements of the system communicate with one another. (For example, how do those who set hospital discharge policy communicate with those allocate emergency accommodation?)

16: Understand how the system communicates with other systems. (For example, how does a family support service talk with Headteachers about early intervention and prevention?)

17: There is formal decision making which is exercised at different levels, but others exercise informal decision making through other forms of influence on a daily basis.

Stage 2: Making the system work better

Element 1: How should people working and volunteering in the system behave?

Equality of voice

Manifesto Point 18: People working and volunteering in the system should promote equality of voice – everyone needs to be heard.

Relationship building and dialogue

19: Everyone should seek to foster a sense of community amongst all the different people within the system.

20: Collaboration is a key to success.

21: Doing dialogue properly takes work. It requires safe spaces, conversations that are framed well, a commitment to understanding diversity of experience and developing empathy and an understanding of historical context. It is important to separate conversations about purpose from conversations about money.

Empathy and Difference

22: Effective dialogue won't happen until 'stood in others shoes'

23: Everyone has to understand, acknowledge and value difference. There will be differences in history, ideology, perspectives and practice. To successfully collaborate these should be understood and acknowledged. Everyone must recognise the roots of their own judgements and values, and be prepared to delabel other people within the system.

24: Everyone should recognise that what appear to be 'vested' interested are people who are being driven by their fears and pressures. Take time to understand these.

Personal openness to change – a commitment to learning

25: Adaptation happens through dialogue between people and challenging one another to be better. Everyone must be prepared to talk with others openly and give and receive challenge in a spirit of improvement.

26: System change starts with the individual – there must be a willingness to grow and develop. Everyone needs to recognise and acknowledge their own need to change.

27: Learning starts with embracing the idea that you don't know something. Not knowing is not something to be scared of.

28: Learning happens in many different ways: by doing, reflecting, sharing, challenging, and through effective use of data and analysis. All of these different skills are required.

29: Everyone has their own history which supports or prevents change. Everyone should support people to let go of the hurt which can prevent an openness to change.

30: Everyone must learn how to understand the value of undertaking risky activity and the importance of failure

Energy

31: Make change quick, easy and fun

32: Change requires energy and drive from everyone. Make use of energy for change wherever you find it.

33: Focus on what you can change

Element 2: How should organisations working in the system behave?

Promoting effective dialogue

34: Organisations should create safe spaces for dialogue

35: All voices must be heard within the dialogue.

Complexity and autonomy

36: Decisions should be taken as close to the person/community affected as possible

Design and delivery of interventions which support people with severe and multiple disadvantage

37: Organisations must design and deliver interventions which respond to the authentic and well-understood needs and strengths of those they serve (not to external targets, or other drivers which divert the system from achieving its purpose)

38: Organisations must understand and manage the time and resource implications of their promises

Learning, Performance Management and Accountability

39: Organisations must be committed to continually learning, and adapting and improving their practice.

40: Measure only that which helps people to understand progress to achieving purpose - and use those measures to improve, not for accountability

41: Organisations must create a positive error culture, in which people authentically share their practice, and their uncertainties, with one another.

42: Organisations need to find ways for people to hold each other to account for the quality of their practice. Developing peer accountability mechanisms meets this need.

How should the system infrastructure work – what are the behaviours of those who co-ordinate and lead the system?

43: Systems require co-ordination and leadership in order to function well.

44: Systems require distributed and collaborative leadership. Leadership is required throughout the system, not just in one role, nor at one scale, nor at one level of seniority. No-one controls the system, so all must be responsible for it.

45: Systems leadership requires a different set of leadership skills. It requires leaders with less ego, and those that can galvanise people who are beyond their ability to control. All the communities in a place need to be involved in change.

46: Systems-leadership roles require leaders at every level to galvanise people to create a shared high-level purpose

47: Part of the system co-ordination role involves checking that all those within the system who need to be heard, are heard

48: System co-ordination must come from the top-down, bottom-up and middle-out.

49: All the leaders in the system must make a long-term commitment to developing a sustainable funding model for a) all the key elements of the system and b) the system infrastructure itself.

50: External perspectives can help challenge/shift/surface entrenched positions

51: It is important to build shared perspectives amongst multiple partners in order to drive change. This is a crucial part of the journey that people undertake together.

5. Values and principles which support improvement throughout the system

Some sets of values and principles are required by all the actors within the system, no matter what their role.

Equality

52: Everyone is a valuable part of community so everyone needs a voice

53: Prior inequalities of power must be addressed to equality of dialogue

Shared ownership

54: If people haven't/don't own/develop solution, they are unlikely to trust it

Power of relationships

55: Open, positive, and supportive relationships matter to people at every level and part of system

Trust

56: Trust makes systems work better.

Honesty and openness

57: Honesty and openness is required in the dialogue between actors in order that everyone in the system can learn, and that the system can adapt. The structural issues that discourage honesty and openness (such as unnecessary competition) must be addressed.

Kindness

58: Kindness and compassion are fundamental principles in making systems work better for those who experience severe and multiple disadvantage.

Reflection

59: Everyone's practice improves through critical reflection.

Historic review of place-based approaches

IVAR Summary paper for Lankelly Chase Foundation board meeting February 2016

1. OVERVIEW

This paper is based on the findings of a historic review of place-based approaches commissioned by the Lankelly Chase Foundation. It provides an overview of analysis and learning from over 100 pieces of literature on place-based initiatives over the past 50 or so years – both government and foundation-sponsored – mainly in the UK, but also in the US, Europe, Canada and Australia. The aim of this paper is to help inform the Foundation's board in its assessment of the potential to support systems change through a place-based funding programme.

The potential for learning from past programmes is considerable, with the following caveats:

- Much of the evidence in the UK to date is based on government initiatives.
- The context has changed, e.g. austerity measures (including welfare cuts), the labour and housing markets, and the role that local agencies can play.
- 'No one size fits all'. In other words, the success or otherwise of an initiative depends also on local context
- Context is particularly important when it comes to applying lessons from international experience.

Building on learning from previous programmes, we are able to identify four strategic decisions which require the input of trustees because they are about assessing whether to implement place-based funding. There are also five practical issues of which trustees will need to be aware, but that are likely to be mainly handled by officers since they concern the design and implementation of place-based funding.

The overarching message is that place-based funding takes time – to understand an area and build relationships – and that this will need to be reflected in both practical plans for implementation as well as the expectations of trustees regarding progress. There is no 'right way' of doing place-based work – it will always be a leap of faith, to some degree. It is, therefore, particularly important to commit to ongoing reflection and adaptation throughout the design and delivery of place-based funding.

ISSUES FOR TRUSTEES

Four strategic questions to help trustees assess whether to implement place-based funding

Purpose – what is your understanding of place-based funding and what are you hoping to achieve?

Role – what you can offer and how? What assets will you draw on and with what purpose?

Where to work – how are you defining place and scale in relation to your purpose?

Focus – given the above, what are realistic ambitions and expectations?

Five issues to inform trustees regarding the design of a place-based funding approach

Partners – who to work with and why

Community engagement – why and how

Timescales – the time needed to establish trust and achieve demonstrable change

Effectiveness, evaluation and learning – the challenges of demonstrating impact and the need for a learning approach

Exit and legacy – thinking about sustainability from the start.

2. ASSESSING WHETHER TO IMPLEMENT PLACE-BASED FUNDING

2.1 Purpose

The literature stresses the importance of clarity of purpose from the outset. As we understand it, the rationale for place-based funding at Lankelly Chase is to achieve systems change, in the belief that a holistic approach is necessary for change and that this is best achieved at local level. Within that, there are still important questions about **what place-based means** and what your **‘theory of place’** is.

Previous approaches to place-based work have often been hampered by a lack of clarity about their purpose and aims which can lead to: a mismatch between aims and design/delivery; confusion in the community with which you choose to work; commissioning evaluation processes that do not provide the desired learning.

What place-based means

The literature tends to distinguish between:

- **Regeneration** (top-down, mainly physical environment, economic focus, tend to be government initiatives in the UK) and **community development** (bottom-up, resident-led, more attention to social objectives).
- **People and place** – does the intervention aim to improve life for residents (whether or not they stay) or to make the place a better place to live and stay (and more attractive to potential incomers)?
- **Residents and agencies/individuals who work in an area** – in working to achieve systems change, the learning is that it is necessary to work ‘on both sides of the equation’.

The above findings highlight the need for **clarity about the motivation or starting point for choosing to work in place**. It is equally important that there is a collective understanding – by everyone from the trustees to the staff – regarding the aim of place-based work. Here we are talking about the broad organisational drivers for taking a place-based approach, with an assumption (based on conversations with Lankelly Chase staff) that each area would then develop its own set of specific local objectives and aims.

Limitations of place-based approaches

Much of the literature argues that change cannot be achieved simply at neighbourhood level – it is necessary to consider how you will connect beyond place and at different scales. What ambition does Lankelly Chase have to influence the external forces that impact on an area (how and at what stage) and/or spread the lessons from one place to the wider area and beyond? The focus will be on identifying who is best to take what forward and being clear about how these different scales of activity link up.

2.2 Role

Previous approaches highlight the importance of considering how you will deploy your assets/resources in relation to the aims of the work and your values and underpinning assumptions. In particular, being self-aware about the assumptions you are bringing and about how locals see you (they may see you first and foremost as

money; or may not know who you are): *‘One clear lesson from the Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs) is that every institution has a history, a reputation, a modus operandi, and a set of constraints that influence how it can engage with local communities’*.³

Key questions

What is your theory of money? What role do you believe your money will play in the place-based approach? Will it be, for example, to unlock/unblock issues that arise or to facilitate people coming together (e.g. the San Francisco Foundation which uses targeted, incremental investment as a catalyst⁴).

What do you bring other than money? And therefore what role can you play?

- **Independence** – potential for brokerage, a neutral arbiter, challenge and dissent (e.g. the extent to which you are willing to critique structural players). This also requires thinking about what leverage/authority you have to get the right people on board and how it can best be established.
- **Time and continuity** – not tied to statutory financial years or political whim (which has derailed many promising initiatives in the past). Able to invest in relationships, collaboration, capacity building.

Bear in mind that money can create competition and/or suspicion within the community, as well as the risk of setting unrealistic expectations. Learning from previous approaches highlights:

- **The importance of not leading with money** (for example, CCIs in the US⁵) – instead begin by building relationships in and understanding an area before deploying assets.
- **Money doesn’t have to be big to have an impact** – the way funding is given can be just as important, and there is value in having small pots of funding with few strings attached (for example, Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s Neighbourhood’s Programme⁶).

2.3 Where to work

The literature suggests that this will be informed by multiple factors, a combination of the aims, theory of place, where you already have relationships and existing knowledge, etc. Key findings for consideration:

Identifying an area

³ Kubisch, A., Auspos, P., Brown, P., Buck, E., Dewar, T. (2011) Voices from the field III: Lessons and challenges for foundations based on two decades of community-change efforts, *Foundation Review*, 3, 1 (p141)

⁴ Cytron, N. (2010) Improving the outcomes of place-based initiatives: The challenges and prospects of implementing targeted neighborhood revitalization strategies in the current economic environment, *Community Investments*, Spring, 22,

⁵ Kubisch, A., Auspos, P., Brown, P., and Dewar, T. (2010) *Voices from the field III: Lessons and Challenges from two decades of community-change efforts*, Washington: The Aspen Institute

⁶ Taylor, M., Wilson, M., Purdue, D., and Wilde, P. (2007) *Changing neighbourhoods: Lessons from the JRF Neighbourhood Programme*, Bristol: Policy Press

- **Will you work in cold spots or places where capacity/momentum already exists?** This decision will affect phasing and what you do. The literature often argues for the latter – or, if the former, for a period of community development to help communities get to ‘first base’. If you are working in more than one area it is possible to test both.

Setting boundaries

- **The boundaries you set around a place will always be somewhat arbitrary/fuzzy;** people come and go and needs are not restricted to set areas. However, the boundaries do need to be meaningful to local residents.
- **Setting the boundaries tight/small (i.e. neighbourhood level) may make it more possible to measure/achieve change** and be more engaged in your approach.
- **The choice of area is likely to be sensitive locally** and so will need to be communicated/explained carefully.

2.4 Whether and how to focus

There are a number of issues from the review that are closely linked to decisions about purpose and which have arisen in discussions with the Foundation during our research:

- **Will the focus be on a place generally, or an issue within place, or a group of individuals with particular needs?** Another common distinction in the literature is between taking an issue and testing it in a particular geographical area or taking an area as the focus and looking at what you understand about it, what is around, how you can support people.
- **The importance of having realistic ambitions and fewer outcomes.** Most early schemes were vague or pursued goals inconsistent with resources.⁷ New Deal for Communities (NDC)⁸ was, for example, too diluted in terms of its focus and resources; the Single Regeneration Budget found it is better to focus but you still need to identify how activity connects to the bigger picture.⁹
- **‘Intentional investment’ is essential** – learning from the US, for example, is that ‘overspill’ does not happen; if you want something to change you need to focus on it.

3. DESIGNING A PLACE-BASED APPROACH

3.1 Partners

⁷ Hausner, V. and Associates (1991) *Small Area-Based Initiatives. A review of recent experience*. London: Victor Hausner and Associates

⁸ Batty, E., Beatty, C., Foden, M., Lawless, P., Pearson, S., Wilson, I. (2010) *The New Deal for Communities experience: A final assessment. The New Deal for Communities Evaluation: Final Report – Volume 7*, London: Department for Communities and Local Government

⁹ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2002) *Turning areas around: The impact of SRB on final outcomes*, London: ODPM

There is an extensive field of literature on partnership working which is beyond the scope of the current review. Here we highlight some of the relevant learning from earlier place-based approaches as it relates to design:

- **It is essential to think through how to enter and not ‘parachute’ in.** Allow development time to get to know the area, build relationships with local agencies and residents and cultivate awareness of what is already going on. Too many past initiatives fail on this count.
- **Will you work through a local intermediary body or have a person/office on the ground?** The majority of previous attempts worked with intermediaries to some degree. Some who are working in more than one area have developed a network of ‘light touch’ support – e.g. the JRF Neighbourhood Programme. Either way, it is important to choose those that align with values, can be trusted to engage the community and are reflective about the doors that they may or may not be able to unlock.
- **How you will work with other local ‘key players’.** Literature suggests too little attention on informal ways of working together, too much on getting structures right. Think about what level of commitment you need:
 - It is essential to work with the local authority, but they may be suspicious/feel threatened, therefore important to identify what you bring (your purpose and value), especially in the context of significant cuts to local authority funding.
 - The private sector rarely gets mentioned – perhaps because place-based approaches are often in areas relatively abandoned by the market; small businesses may not have the resources/time to engage.
- **Don’t underestimate the difficulty of joining up – it is a long-standing problem:** *‘The absence of integrated working is long-standing, culturally embedded, historically impervious, obvious to all concerned and deeply entrenched in central and local government’.*¹⁰ Too often even different government/foundation initiatives in the same place fail to connect. There are also structural barriers to linking things up, such as different targets and regulatory frameworks (noted, for example, in the work of CCIs in the US and Total Place¹¹ in England).

3.2 Community engagement

The literature is clear that it is essential to value local knowledge and that there needs to be a shift of power to local residents if change is to be achieved and sustained. Again, there is an extensive field of relevant literature that is beyond the remit of this review. Here we highlight learning about community engagement in previous place-based approaches that is relevant to design:

- **Importance of being clear about reasons/assumptions** for working with a community and how you will introduce your purpose and role.
- **The literature shows that a phased development** (see 3.3) is essential in order to engage meaningfully with a community (for example, District

¹⁰ Stewart, M. (1999) *Local action to counter exclusion*, London: Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions

¹¹ Humphries, R. & Gregory, S. (eds) (2010) *Place-based approaches and the NHS: Lessons from Total Place, Seminar Highlights*, London: The Kings Fund

Partnerships for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland¹²). In colder spots, allow time for residents' confidence to build and skills and prepare for governance roles (early US schemes failed to do this). Intensive handholding may also be needed to get communities to spend.

- **Reaching all parts of the community also requires a phased approach** – this will be particularly important for Lankelly Chase in its focus on working with individuals experiencing severe and multiple disadvantage. Finding the right balance takes time *and* community development support (which may be intensive or 'light touch' – see 3.1):
 - Often need to **start with the 'usual suspects'** (who are usual suspects for good reasons – they are willing to put in the time and effort – as well as not so good) but find a variety of ways in and build in a commitment to, support for and realistic timetable for spreading out.
 - **Small 'no strings attached' grants** (including to individuals with good ideas) can help bring in the harder to reach, but support needs to be provided in the bidding process.
 - **Different communities/generations relate to place and neighbourhood differently.** Communities of interest may look to city-wide (even global) organisations and social media, rather than neighbourhood.

3.3 Timescales

Being effective in this work takes time:

- Again, the **importance of phasing** to create a level playing field for communities and allow for the different timescales that different issues require (clean, green and safety tend to be early issues for local communities; health and education may come further down the line).
- Part of the above may be to **include a 'year zero'** (or more, e.g. development funding) for foundation building – to give breathing space for trust and relationships to develop.
- **Long-term aims and commitment** – learning in the US is that 'limited' time frames have restricted progress, by which they mean 7-10 years as a *minimum*. Clearly this is long-term by UK standards but reflects the importance of committing to an area and the benefits that working long-term can bring.
- However, within the long-term aims, it is also important to **establish milestones or markers of progress** that link to the overarching journey and some '**quick wins**' to help engage and motivate the community.

3.4 Effectiveness, evaluation and learning

- **Finding evidence of impact is incredibly difficult** – issues of time, context/external factors (standing still might be the best we can hope for against a background of austerity), cost and the difficulty of counting the

¹² Greer, J. (2001) Whither partnership governance in Northern Ireland? *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 19

things that really matter (relationships, confidence, trust, social capital, for example). It is also hard to find evidence of the processes that led to achieving change; particularly relevant to Lankelly Chase given its focus on systems, which necessitates an emphasis on relationships and processes.

- **To this end, taking a place-based approach will always be a leap of faith to some degree.** Even the NDC with a huge budget and evaluation was only able to demonstrate individual rather than area-level effects. Emphasises importance of long-term plan with milestones, a clear focus and realistic ambitions.
- **Most demonstrable success is around changes to infrastructure/physical environment** (e.g. Single Regeneration Budget, CCIs, Soziale Stadt¹³). These types of changes can also help to engage a community/boost resident satisfaction on a small scale (see 'quick wins', 3.3).
- Multiple reasons for **limitations of previous approaches**: economic environment not connecting to neighbourhood level (e.g. the Urban Programme¹⁴); strategy (too ambitious/optimistic/complex) and implementation (low capacity/disconnected funding) failures.
- **Not just about effectiveness and impact**; place-based working necessitates a commitment to 'multi-dimensional thinking' which is complex and requires a commitment to research and learning.
- **Build evaluation and learning in from the outset** – including all key stakeholders and structured **points of reflection** to assess process and outcomes against values and principles.
- Value of both **local and external reference groups**.

¹³ Nowosielski, M. (2012) Between Area-Based Initiatives and Community Development Programmes: The Example of the Soziale Stadt Programme, *Sociologija i prostor*, 50, 3

¹⁴ Pacione, M. (1997) *Britain's Cities: Geography of division in urban Britain*, London: Routledge

3.5 Exit and legacy

- **Build sustainability in from the start** – what do you hope the end point will be? For example: mainstreaming activity/community capacity, projects continue, etc. Thinking about where you want a community to get to – and how you will know when it is time to leave. Finally, plan for *how* you will leave.

