Skills for Regeneration: 
Learning by Community Champions

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Skills for Regeneration: Learning by Community Champions

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Skills for Regeneration: Learning by Community Champions

Summary

Project aims and objectives

The ‘Skills for Regeneration’ project has sought to assess the skills and knowledge developed by individuals benefiting from the Community Champions fund, in leading and taking part in community-based regeneration projects. Awards are intended especially to assist people new to regeneration and with ideas or leadership abilities to offer, and to enable more experienced individuals to drive projects forward and pass on their expertise to others.

The Community Champions Fund

The Community Champions fund is a programme of the Department for Education and Skills and the Home Office. It provides small grants, typically up to £2,000, to support individuals by:

- developing their skills, through formal or informal training, and access to information and wider networks; and/or
- supporting them in driving forward community projects and passing on their expertise to others

They may already be active in their communities, or want to play an active role, as community entrepreneurs, mentors, leaders, or animateurs. The common theme is that they can inspire local action and involvement in regeneration and learning activity.

The potential uses of Community Champions funding are very wide, reflecting the huge range of possible forms of community development activity and routes to learning - formal and informal - relating to community-based regeneration.

The programme operates across England and is administered through Government Offices for the Regions who contract with intermediaries to reach target communities and deliver the programme on the ground. It is one of a number of related small grant schemes which link Government agendas for neighbourhood renewal, active citizenship, community cohesion and Lottery funding.

Project method

We completed telephone interviews with 404 Community Champions (ie, those who had received a grant under the programme). After completion of the full survey, we followed up 20 in further depth to provide further material, quotes and case studies for the report.

In designing the questionnaire, we sought to elicit information about skills and knowledge from a number of angles, recognising that, for many people much of their skills and knowledge is tacit and so embedded that they are not readily conscious of what they know and can do. People also may not be used to discussing skills and
knowledge as concepts, and it is also common for people new to a field of activity ‘not to know what they don’t know’.

We tested our approach in pilot interviews, which confirmed the value of investigating what Champions felt they were more able to do, what they knew more about, and how their experience had changed the way they do things, eg, in dealing with funding organisations and officialdom in general. We also asked what interviewees wished they had known or had been able to do when they started. Our questions on learning and skills were informed by the Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Framework developed by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.

**Background of Community Champions**

Around three in five Community Champions were in employment and a similar proportion aged between 24 and 49. A little over half were women. The programme has been very successful in reaching Black and Minority Ethnic communities, with proportions of take-up amongst Black Caribbean and Black African groups being three times their presence in the population as a whole.

Two out of three Community Champions were graduates or qualified to A level, technician or supervisory levels. This compared to only 28% in the population as a whole. Nearly six out of 10 Community Champions had ‘a great deal’ of prior experience of voluntary or community activity, and relatively few had very little (11%) or no previous experience (4%).

**Projects pursued by Community Champions**

In keeping with the learning objectives of Community Champions, nearly 50% of all projects had explicit learning aims, be it for the individual Community Champion or members of the group in which they were involved. Otherwise, the most frequently cited themes or needs pursued by Community Champions were projects involving arts, crafts and hobbies (mentioned by 27% of respondents), community involvement (26%) and information, advice and counselling (20%). Other areas of activity included work on community centres/meeting places, health care and sport/exercise.

The people whom the Community Champions were seeking to benefit vary widely too. A substantial proportion (43%) were seeking outcomes for the community at large (in a given locality), while young people - school age (24%) and 16-25 year olds (22%) constituted the main focus for considerable numbers of Champions. Other target groups of note were black and minority ethnic groups, disabled people, those aged over 50 and parents.

The uses to which Community Champions funds were put covered a remarkable range - which reflects the desire in the programme design to free up possibilities rather than constrain them. Predominant uses were purchasing equipment (46%); developing projects (41%); attending events or short courses (27%); providing training for others (25%); producing a newsletter (23%); and removing barriers to training, e.g., meeting childcare costs (22%).

Examples of learning activities promoted by Champions for themselves and their groups included training for board members; visiting other countries to see how they mainstream disadvantaged minorities; attending national conferences (e.g., that of the Development Trusts Association); first aid training; managing a credit union and management training for setting up a community garden. Illustrations of personal
Learning included computer training; courses in psychology, bereavement counselling and in sailing instruction for blind people.

Some 44% of Community Champions have secured funding from other sources before, during or after the period of their Community Champions award. Typical sources include the Lottery Funds (32% of those receiving other funding), local authorities (27%), and local charities (23%).

**Achievements and benefits**

Nearly half (48%) of all the Community Champions express what they have achieved as a result of obtaining the funding in terms of realising their project goals. Nearly two in five stressed how they met community needs.

For nearly two-thirds, the clearest personal benefits related to increased confidence and self-esteem and satisfaction from helping others. Knowledge of funding sources was important too: fundamental for many in enabling them to pursue their projects further, projects to which they typically had a very strong personal attachment.

**Learning Gains**

The most important, single things that Champions learned can be grouped under the headings of understanding funding organisations (32%); community needs (32%); organisational skills (22%); team working and networking (17%); and personal skills (12%).

**Increased capabilities:** 64% of Community Champions stated that they were more able to represent local views and needs; over half had improved their project management skills; and 50% of Community Champions felt more able to turn project ideas into action. Other benefits reported by significant numbers of participants were a greater ability to motivate others; an improved ability to communicate; increased ability to raise interest and awareness; and feeling more able to help others to develop their skills and confidence.

**Knowledge gained:** over half the participants reported both a better understanding of community needs and improved knowledge of funding sources. Around a third of participants knew more about people to contact about community activities, sources of information and advice, and relevant local organisations.

The main areas where Community Champions had changed their approach were in dealing with funders (37%); their personal skills and behaviours, e.g., acting with more confidence, being more professional, and motivating volunteers (30%).

**Skills and knowledge passed on to others:** the main themes were skills and knowledge about community development and regeneration, e.g., in applying for funding (22%), practical skills such as IT skills, specific training in running the project (e.g., music or sports activities) and other skills relating to the operation of the project (21%), and funding opportunities and procedures (20%). Secondary themes were communication skills, organisational skills, team working and networking and personal skills. In some cases, what they have passed on was less about specific skills or knowledge but rather confidence, through demonstrating what’s possible and what can actually be achieved. Champions have instilled positive thinking, encouraged enthusiasm, belief in others and self-belief amongst members of their groups.
Interviewees were asked, “Looking back, is there anything you wish you’d known or had been able to do when you started?”. The most prominent sets of responses related to knowledge of funding sources (14%), being more aware of the time that things would take (10%) or the difficulties they were likely to encounter with their project (8%) and hearing about Community Champions earlier (8%). It is perhaps significant, and an indication of the level of their previous experience of community activity, that some 47% said that there was ‘nothing’ they could identify that they wished they had known earlier.

The less experienced Community Champions

A group of 61 Community Champions who had little or no previous experience of community activity or volunteering before they obtained their Community Champions funding were analysed separately. Their pattern of responses was broadly similar to that of the full survey population, though there was a higher proportion (nearly one in three) who were pursuing community information projects, and slightly more sports/exercise and health care and fewer arts/crafts/hobbies and community involvement.

A greater proportion of the less experienced Champions compared to respondents as a whole said they gained skills in managing projects (43%, compared to 32%) and in developing business action plans (23% compared to 10%). The less experienced Champions compared to respondents as a whole were also more likely to say they gained knowledge in funding sources (67% compared to 56%) and awareness of possibilities for action (20% compared to 11%).

The less experienced Champions were less likely to say they gained improved understanding of community needs (at 51% slightly lower than for all interviewees - 57%) and a far lower proportion (5% compared to 22%) said they passed on skills and knowledge through training others - likely to be a function of their having less experience in the first place.

As for their future plans, there was a higher proportion of people proposing to develop new projects (one in five), and a lower proportion intending to continue their projects (one in three compared to one in two). The same proportion, one quarter, intended to expand their existing project.

Support for Community Champions

We explored with interviewees the support they received as part of their involvement in the Community Champions programme and what they valued in this. More than a third (35%) were very satisfied with the overall support received from Community Champions and could see no way in which it could be improved. Only 10% found the information and support ‘not at all useful’. Champions very much appreciated the straightforward application form, typically contrasting it pointedly with those of other bodies and programmes.

Community Champions made a variety of suggestions for improving the programme. Just over a quarter of interviewees made suggestions about further funding, stemming mainly from their personal situation (notably arguing for more money). Others felt that the word about Community Champions should be spread more widely, believing that many more people would benefit if only they were aware of the opportunity.
On guidance and support, suggestions included more information about successful Champions and their projects; closer, one-to-one contact/periodic follow-up; help with management and/or presentation skills; training seminars (e.g., on fundraising and assertiveness); and use of interpreters for people whose first language is not English. Such support is already available to Community Champions in some areas, but this is typically dependent on how well resourced and networked intermediaries are, beyond the funds they receive for running the programme.

We also asked the 20 case study interviewees what advice they had to offer others who might be considering Community Champions. Many said ‘go for it’, or something similar, and almost all had some tip to suggest relating to funding. These included finding out the specific requirements and rules of different sources of funds, and the right people to talk to; doing your research properly - including needs to be addressed and costs; and not being afraid to ask for help in completing forms if you are not confident about this.

**Programme strengths and opportunities**

Overall in carrying out the survey, we have been struck by the numbers of interviewees for whom the Community Champions programme made a very real difference, both to themselves and to the communities with whom they work. Given that relatively few Champions have pursued formal learning through the programme, the greatest skills and knowledge gains have come through ‘learning by doing’, most notably in relation to understanding community needs, dealing with partner/funding agencies, and organisational skills. There is substantial evidence of increased capabilities, which often went hand-in-hand with increased confidence.

Programme strengths indicated by the research include:

- what small sums of money can do to release energy and ideas
- the ease of application
- the flexibility of what people can do with their grants
- its being aimed to *individuals* as well as groups (in contrast to several related programmes)
- its scope for enabling ‘learning by doing’
- its success in reaching black and minority ethnic (BME) groups
- substantial evidence of increased confidence and learning, notably in developing project ideas, understanding community needs, accessing funding and dealing with funders and officialdom

Analysis of the survey also drew out some concerns which affect how successful the Community Champions programme can be in maximising learning gains and community benefits:

- some dissonance between what the programme is supporting and some of the desired outcomes (e.g., with limited evidence of progression to formal learning associated with regeneration and community development, or employability benefits)
- the high proportion of people with a great deal of experience of community activity and graduates who obtain funding
- the extent to which individual Champions are left to their own devices, and the ‘hit or miss’ nature of learning by doing, if the learning is unstructured and there is limited or no access to sources to experience and support
• some cases of marginal benefit where Community Champions is a small part of total project funding
• examples of Champions left ‘high and dry’ when their funding runs out, with a lack of information about where to go for further funding and support

This analysis leads to arguments for greater efforts to target less experienced and less qualified potential Champions, and to ensure a more integrated approach linking with related funds and sources of community development support, with the objective of offering more and better routes for sustainable projects and greater learning gains, for the Champions and the groups they serve.
1 Introduction to ‘Skills for Regeneration: Learning by Community Champions’

1.1 Project Aims and Objectives

The ‘Skills for Regeneration’ project has sought to assess the kinds of skills gained from leading and taking part in community-based regeneration projects, and to assess how far the Community Champions programme has helped beneficiaries develop these skills. The programme is especially intended to develop skills of people new to regeneration and with ideas or leadership abilities to offer.

The specific project objectives were, by surveying Community Champions beneficiaries, to:

- assess the skills gained by local people in leading and taking part in regeneration projects, especially small scale, community-based initiatives
- explore what participants do next with the skills gained from the programme
- suggest ways of improving Community Champions in providing opportunities for learning and skills development

This chapter proceeds to explain the Community Champions fund, how it works, who it is aimed at, and the types of activity it is intended to support.

We then set out the approach we took to researching the skills gained by Community Champions.

Subsequent chapters describe the Community Champions, their projects and uses of the programme funding, their achievements and learning, the support they had, and their plans, before drawing conclusions.

1.2 What is the Community Champions programme?

The Community Champions programme has been set up by the Department for Education and Skills to “help support and develop the work of local people who are involved in, or who want to be involved in, changing their communities for the better”\(^1\) through small, one-off grants, ‘normally’ up to £2,000. It was launched in 1999 and currently has an annual budget of £3m, co-funded by the Home Office and administered through Government Offices for the Regions (GORs) in England.

Its specific objectives are to:

- “support individuals who are already active in their communities, or who would like to become active in their communities, by developing their skills, through formal and informal training, and access to information, wider networks and learning opportunities; and
- encourage more community involvement in regeneration activity by supporting key individuals who can drive forward community projects and pass on their expertise to others in their community and to other communities.”

The DfES guidance envisages that the individuals concerned may play roles as “inspirational figures, community entrepreneurs, community mentors and community leaders, instrumental in improving the involvement of communities in regeneration and learning activity.

While the focus is primarily on individuals, the Community Champions fund will also support small-scale, community-inspired projects, where the individual leading the project has not had previous experience in seeking funding. (In this case, the fund is aimed at individuals and community groups rather than established, formally constituted voluntary organisations.)

DfES guidance also notes that, “Many areas and communities bid for funds but are unsuccessful, whilst in others people have not yet been able to identify and articulate their needs. Engaging people in community-led activity encourages individual development and improves confidence. It may also whet their appetite for further learning or for becoming more actively engaged in renewing their neighbourhood”. There is also a recurring motif in the guidance that the Community Champions programme should spread good practice in community-led regeneration activities.

Community Champions funding is provided under section 126 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, which gives the Secretary of State the power to give financial assistance to “any person in respect of expenditure incurred in connection with activities which contribute to the development of an area”.

1.3 How does the Community Champions programme work?

The Government’s intention is that “by making small amounts of funding more easily accessible the Community Champions fund is able to reach community level encouraging a true neighbourhood approach to regeneration”.

The Community Champions budget is shared by the nine Government Offices for the Regions. In administering the programme, GORs are encouraged to adopt a very flexible approach and try new approaches even if this means a greater level of risk. The guidance states that a key feature of the fund is that it is “simple for groups and individuals to access with bureaucracy kept to a minimum”.

Use of intermediaries

All GORs have chosen to deliver Community Champions via intermediary organisations. In some regions, this involves one or two regional bodies (eg, in the South West, the South West Voluntary Organisations Forum; Scarman Trust in London) or a larger number of sub-regional or more local organisations (eg, community foundations in the each county in the East Midlands). In some regions, bodies dedicated to serving the needs of particular communities act as intermediaries (eg, Age Concern and Disability West Midlands in the West Midlands; MENTER, the regional BME Network in the East of England) have been recruited to promote the programme to harder to reach groups.

Intermediaries negotiate a management fee of up to 15%, to cover administration, promotion and support for applicants. The extent to which they support Community Champions varies in practice, depending on the other resources at their disposal. In

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some cases, they have other related funds to promote and administer (eg, from EU, Lottery or other government or sources3), which may provide them with economies of scale and a greater ability to support.

**Application process**

DfES, with GORs and intermediaries, has kept the process of applying for Community Champions very simple, asking for details of what people propose to do, the support they need and how their activities will benefit the community. The box below sets out the questions in the standard form with the accompanying explanations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions in the Community Champions Application Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>What would you like to do?</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>This space gives you an opportunity to tell us about your idea. You may wish inform us of, for example, who else would be helping you, and where it is going to be taking place.</em></td>
</tr>
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</table>

| Do you need help in developing your idea? eg identifying a training provider for the sort of skills you’d like to develop or help to share your positive experiences with other communities. |
| *This could be a training course, or speaking to someone who has successfully achieved something similar* |

| Tell us about the community you’d like to see benefit. |
| *The community could be your neighbourhood or around a specific interest such as disability issues or music.* |

| What difference do you think your idea will make? |
| *This is the difference to you, your community or other communities* |

| What do you expect to happen by the end of your project? |
| *We need to know what you and the community will benefit from this project. This could be number of people trained, new groups set up, or further funding from elsewhere received.* |

| What would you like to do next? |
| *How would you like your idea to develop once funding has ended. What help would you like to realise this?* |

| How much money are you applying for? |
| *Please give a breakdown of how you expect to spend the money. This could be a timetable or action plan. You may not know exact costs at this stage, particularly if your request is for a training need.* |

| Is this the first time you have made an application for government funding? |
| *If it is have you have ever been involved with any other community projects? It is useful to know if Community Champions has given you first chance to take an idea forward, or if it is helping you to develop your ideas further.* |

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3 Appendix E describes other small grants which relate to Community Champions.
Who are the target participants?

The DfES guidance states that Community Champions is to be targeted at "individuals in those areas where community activity or direct involvement in developing plans for regeneration is still very weak and where this is seen as a barrier to helping their communities access support from mainstream funds to improve their quality of life". Support for "community-inspired projects" is possible, provided that a key individual from a group is identified as the Community Champion.

The Guidance also describes the likely characteristics of Community Champions - see the box below.

Who are Community Champions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Community Champions’ are likely to be individuals who:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• have a real insight into what is needed in their community</td>
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<tr>
<td>• are committed to helping their community by taking forward ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>• have the support of community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• are keen to develop their skills and experience and that of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• entrepreneurial and have got round barriers to getting things underway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• realistic, able to help communities set achievable goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• good at networking and adapting ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• good at helping others to help themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• persistent and able to provide support when others get disheartened</td>
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</table>

They may be either:

• people starting out and wishing to get their ideas and involvement in helping their community off the ground, or
• those who are more experienced and wish to share that experience in helping others.

source: DfES guidance

What types of activity are supported?

GORs and their partners are encouraged to consider different approaches to helping individuals, especially where a small amount of support at a crucial time can help these individuals become strong role models in their communities, for example, helping an ex-offender to develop a more positive role on return to their community.

The Guidance suggests that, “Support is likely to be mostly travel expenses or specific packages to enable individuals to visit other community groups, access experts, or peer support from others in a similar position to themselves, training provision etc or advice and support to overcome particular barriers to being involved in their community or to start off their idea. The support can include anything that builds the capacity of individuals or community groups, for example, to manage self-help or learning projects. Some activity may also enable service providers to understand the issues better from the communities’ perspectives”. Appendix A provides a list of possible uses of Community Champion awards. Table 1 below summarises these. (Examples in practice will be found in Section 3.3.)
### Table 1
Potential Community Champion Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Uses of Community Champion Grants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Attend events/ short courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Mentor/ advise others</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Organise events to involve local people</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Carry out a local survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Prepare a bid</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Pursue a longer course/ qualification</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Provide training for others</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Organise volunteers (eg, as mentors)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Develop a website</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Purchase equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Visit other communities/ projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Develop a project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Remove a barrier to training (eg, meet childcare costs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Produce a newsletter</td>
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Community Champions will not provide core funding for voluntary or community organisations nor support large projects where funding is more appropriately available through other sources. The fund will also not support activities of a political or predominantly religious nature, the continuation of existing projects or posts, business start-up, large capital items (ie, equipment costing over £1,000) or paid community workers.

Larger projects which meet the criteria for other sources of funding are not to be supported directly through Community Champions although support can be given to help develop bids and feasibility studies.

### 1.4 Project Methodology

The core of our project involved 404 telephone interviews\(^4\) with Community Champions and 20 follow-up case studies. (Completed interviews represented 31.4% of grant recipients of grants, as recorded by the Community Champions Management Information System at the time of sampling in November 2002.) We also interviewed a selection of intermediaries (nine in all, one per region) used by the Government Offices in promoting and administering Community Champions. They have an overview of the individual Champions, what the Champions have been doing and how they have been faring. They were very helpful in refining the questionnaire, given they insights they could offer into skills, knowledge and support requirements of Community Champions.

**Telephone interviews**

In carrying out the telephone interviews we used a semi-structured questionnaire with both open and closed questions (see Appendix B). Open questions allowed us to gather interviewee opinions (eg, on what they have learnt) and to delve further, while the closed questions gather hard data, eg, about personal characteristics. The majority of questions were open, reflecting the nature of Community Champions as a very flexible programme encompassing an enormously wide range of possible activities and learning.

\(^4\) The regional spread of the interviews was East Midlands 42 (10.4%); East of England 45 (11.1%); London 51 (12.6%); North East 48 (11.9%); North West 50 (12.4%); South East 38 (9.4%); South West 45 (11.1%); West Midlands 40 (9.9%); and Yorkshire and Humber 45 (11.1%). A stratified sample was not used because of limitations in available management information for the programme. There were less than 10 refusals amongst Community Champions approached.
We endeavoured to ensure that questions were simple and straightforward, using Plain English and avoiding regeneration jargon (except where reviewing knowledge of organisations and structures). We were conscious that Community Champions are essentially ‘lay’ participants in regeneration, not professionals and likely to be relatively new to the field. Our discussions with intermediaries and early piloting of the questionnaire caused us, eg, to use the term ‘community activities’ rather than ‘small-scale regeneration’ (which was the term used in our brief).

Questions on learning and skills
Our thinking on the survey was informed by the Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Framework developed by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) as part of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, presented in The Learning Curve strategy. Table 2 sets out the broad range of skill requirements across all those active in renewal, residents, professionals, and policy-makers, and Table 3 the detail for residents involved in renewal activities.

Table 2 Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Framework (Summary)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building the knowledge base</th>
<th>• Building the knowledge base</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Recognising and understanding what works in housing and the built environment, education, worklessness, crime and health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Applying knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Analysing problems, creating opportunities, designing solutions from the knowledge base</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developing skills</th>
<th>• Organisation skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Project appraisal and management, finance and budgeting, mainstreaming resources, monitoring and evaluation, risk assessment and management research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interpersonal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Community engagement, leadership, management of people, valuing diversity, conflict resolution, partnership working, communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changing behaviours</th>
<th>• Entrepreneurial behaviours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Problem solving, spotting opportunities, taking calculated risks, a ‘can do’ philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflective behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Evaluating effectiveness, exploring reasons for success, learning from failure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Learning Curve framework has been designed to relate to a broad range of audiences, including community activists and practitioners. In relation to resident involvement in renewal, The Learning Curve differentiates between the needs of ‘community leaders’, ‘community experts’, and ‘emerging practitioners’, which is relevant in exploring future plans of the Community Champions (see Table 3 below).

---

5 See N McInroy (2002) The Language of Regeneration: Research (CLES)
### Table 3  Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Framework - Residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building the knowledge base</th>
<th>Developing skills</th>
<th>Changing Behaviours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shape and use the knowledge base:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Community Leader</strong></td>
<td><strong>Entrepreneurial and problem solving behaviours</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Share experience of successful and less successful neighbourhood renewal to shape the knowledge base.</td>
<td>• Strategic skills to establish the vision and priorities</td>
<td>• Adopting innovative ways of tackling social problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participate in the analysis of the local situation and use knowledge and good practice to improve the neighbourhood</td>
<td>• Organisational performance management</td>
<td>• Challenging traditional ways of working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Probit and stewardship of resources</td>
<td>• Bringing together ideas, resources and people to instigate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Listening</td>
<td>• Spotting opportunities and making use of under-used resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Negotiation</td>
<td>• Taking calculated risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consensus building, mediation</td>
<td>• Tolerating the possibility of failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conflict resolution and management</td>
<td>• Responding to a problem with a clear outcome in mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communication</td>
<td>• A ‘can-do’ philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community expert</strong></td>
<td><strong>Emerging Practitioner</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflective behaviours</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confidence to share their experience</td>
<td>• Leadership</td>
<td>• Evaluating effectiveness of what is being done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confidence to articulate their hopes, fears and aspirations</td>
<td>• Partnership working</td>
<td>• Constantly revisit relationship of inputs and processes to outputs and outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Entrepreneurial and problem solving behaviours</strong></td>
<td><strong>Explore the reasons for success</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Adopting innovative ways of tackling social problems</td>
<td><strong>Develop the confidence to investigate and learn from failure</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Challenging traditional ways of working</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bringing together ideas, resources and people to instigate change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Spotting opportunities and making use of under-used resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Taking calculated risks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tolerating the possibility of failure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Responding to a problem with a clear outcome in mind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A ‘can-do’ philosophy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


One issue is that people new to a field tend not to know what they need to know; only with experience do they come to appreciate what they need. Even where they have much useful experience (as in the case of the trades unionists in economic regeneration partnerships\(^7\)), they may underestimate the value and relevance of this. The notion of ‘absorptive capacity’ is relevant, whereby someone’s ability to develop their knowledge is a function of the knowledge they already have. We had to be careful in phrasing our questions, avoiding semantic traps (eg, many people have defined ‘learning’ and ‘training’ in relatively narrow ways, associating learning with school or college education and training with formal courses).

---

\(^7\) D Johnstone (1999) Coming in from the Cold: Trades Unionists in Economic Regeneration Partnerships (CLES Local Work no 11)
Our interviews covered:

- the baseline for participants (experience, skills and qualifications - including experience specific to community regeneration)
- projects/activities undertaken
- support used and value placed on different forms of external support
- learning gained
- outcomes (for the individual and the community served)
- plans and further learning needs

Case studies

We undertook 20 follow-up interviews drawn across the nine regions, selected to ensure a mix of Champion characteristics and project types. The Community Champions approached were drawn from a list of 61 ‘less experienced’ interviewees, on the grounds that these were likely to offer the most interesting stories and evidence about projects, benefits, learning needs and learning gained. Of the 20, 18 agreed to be quoted and we provide synopses of six of the follow-up interviews as case studies in Appendix D.

The case study interviews (see Appendix C for our topic guide) covered:

- stimulus and aspiration: what the Champion wanted to achieve when embarking on the project
- what they wanted to achieve, what they have achieved and personal benefits derived
- what support they have accessed and what they have valued
- learning:
  - what they have done for the first time/can do much better than before
  - the most important thing they learnt (and why)
  - what else they had to find out in developing their project
  - specific learning about funding and advice
- what and how they learnt, and what they regard as most important
- future plans (including for further learning)
- advice for others thinking of applying for Community Champions

Taken together, the findings from the telephone interviews and the case studies provide a vivid picture of the skills and knowledge gained by Community Champions and more broadly, the skills and knowledge needed for small-scale, community-led regeneration. They also provide evidence of the benefits of the programme, along with ideas for improving how it is run.

Content of the report

We proceed in Chapter 2 to describe the characteristics of Community Champions before in Chapter 3 setting out their projects, use of their grants, and communities served.

The primary analysis is of the full set of respondents, though we have undertaken a supplementary analysis of the Community Champions who have little or no previous experience of community activities.
Chapter 4 analyses achievements, personal and community benefits, and Chapter 5 the core of the report on learning and skills gained.

Chapter 6 explores support given to Community Champions, and Chapter 7 their plans. We draw our conclusions in Chapter 8.

## 2 Background of Community Champions

The breakdown of interviewees shows that around three in five Community Champions were in employment, and a similar proportion aged between 24 and 49. The majority had a significant amount of previous experience in voluntary or community activities. Over half the Community Champions were women. The programme has been very successful in reaching Black and Ethnic Minority communities.

### 2.1 Employment status, age, gender and ethnicity

#### Employment status

The survey shows that 57% of interviewees were in employment (40% either employed full-time or self-employed) (Fig 1). Some 16% were retired and 10% are unemployed. When we looked at people with little or no experience of community activities, we found that only 46% were in employment.

#### Age

Nearly two in five Community Champions were aged 50 and over (addressing a target for the Home Office who wish to promote volunteering amongst older people). 58% are aged 24 to 49 (Fig 2). (When looking at the less experienced group, 28% were aged under 25.)
Fig 2

Gender

Women made up the majority of Community Champions, at 54% (though less than half in the case of the less experienced group) (Fig 3).

Fig 3

Ethnic group

Community Champions were drawn predominantly from White British segments of the population - seven out of every ten (Fig 4). The next largest ethnic groups were Black (either Caribbean - 6% - or African - 7%). Asian communities account for 7%.

These figures suggest that Community Champions has been very successful in reaching ethnic minority populations, when comparing take-up with Census 2001 data. The most notable differences are:
Skills for Regeneration: Learning by Community Champions

- Black - Caribbean: 6% Community Champions compared with 1.1% population of England
- Black - African: 7% compared with 1% population of England
- Asian - Pakistani: 3% compared with 1.4% population of England

The proportion for Asian - Indian, at 2% is the same for the population as a whole.

**Fig 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White &amp; Black Caribbean</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White &amp; Black African</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White &amp; Asian</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White &amp; Black British</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Black British</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other or Black British</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian British</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic group</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic group</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2.2 Qualifications and experience**

**Qualifications**

Two out of three Community Champions were graduates or qualified to ‘A’ level, technician or supervisory levels (ie, equivalent to NVQ levels III and IV) (Fig 5). This compared to only 28% in the population as a whole (Census 2001). More than one in three had degrees, with a further 10% holding a professional qualification.
(Amongst the ‘less experienced’ sub-group in our follow-up analysis, there was a lower level of qualifications, though still relatively high: at least half have qualifications at NVQ Levels III-V.)

**Previous experience of voluntary and community activity**

Nearly six out of 10 Community Champions had ‘a great deal’ of prior experience of voluntary or community activity (Fig 6), and relatively few had very little (11%) or no previous experience (4%).

Of those with a great deal or some previous experience (341 in all), typical roles have included organising or helping to run events, raising or handling money, or acting as a committee member (Fig 7). Two thirds have played a leadership role, eg, a group or committee chair, and nearly as many have provided information, advice or counselling.
These proportions are far higher than in the population at large: Home Office research\(^8\) has found that people were most likely to have acted as volunteers in:

- raising and handling money: 22%
- organising or helping to run an activity or event: 21%
- giving other practical help: 14%
- being a leader of member of a committee: 13%

Thus, in comparison, Community Champions were much more likely than the population at large to have previous experience in a range of roles in volunteering and community activities.

\(^8\) D Prime, M Zimneck, A Zurawan (2002) “Active Communities: Initial Findings from the 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey”
3 Projects Pursued by Community Champions

3.1 Projects undertaken

We found an exceptionally wide range of projects being undertaken by Community Champions (Fig 8) - which reflects the sheer diversity of community development and regeneration activities undertaken across the country.

In keeping with the learning objectives of the Community Champions programme, nearly 50% of all projects have as part of their purpose learning aims, be it for the individual Community Champion or members of the group with whom they are involved.

Otherwise prominent amongst the themes or areas of need pursued by Community Champions are:

- arts, crafts and hobbies (27%)
- community involvement (26%)
- information, advice and counselling (ie, face-to-face or telephone-based services) (20%)
- community information (eg, newsletters, websites, directories) (18%)
- community centres/meeting places (17%)
- health care (17%)
- sport/exercise (16%)
- children’s education (14%)

There are some multiple responses: interviewees could indicate that their project fell under a number of categories.
In the Home Office research, the most common fields for volunteering were:

- sports and exercise: 13%
- children’s education/ schools: 12%
- hobbies/ recreation/ arts/ social clubs: 10%
- religion: 9%
- youth/ children’s activities: 7%

Thus, in comparison, Community Champions were much more likely than the national population of volunteers to pursue projects that concern arts, crafts and hobbies. Other categories were on a similar level (noting that religious activities are not eligible for Community Champions).

Table 4 provides examples of project activities pursued by Community Champions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Examples of Project Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Set up NVQ in Community Work</td>
<td>• Visiting other projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Management training for setting up a community garden</td>
<td>• Exchange visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working with the Local Strategic Partnership</td>
<td>• Basic English for Asian women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visit other countries to see how they mainstream disadvantaged minorities</td>
<td>• Credit Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Psychology course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Minibus driving</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Attend national conference (e.g., Development Trusts Association)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pre-production studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Community arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-help &amp; creative therapies</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Community website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Newsletter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Youth centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Women’s resource centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Sport & exercise
- Special needs judo club
- Dance & drama group
- Kick boxing club for girls
- Exercise for the unfit
- Wheelchair rugby
- Wheelchair basketball

### Children's education
- Junior brass band
- Mini outdoor skating area
- Toy library
- Summer camp
- Fishing group
- Play area
- Learning disabilities group
- Wilderness expedition
- French classes
- Football team
- After-school/holiday club

### Young people
- Youth Centre
- Anti-drugs booklet
- Assertiveness course
- Youth theatre
- Arab Women’s Group
- Outings for older Hindus
- Support for action against racist crime
- Ethiopian Support Group
- Multilingual signs
- Assessing needs of Angolan women
- Translation service
- Ethnic minority newsletter
- Cypriot Elders

### Ethnic minorities
- Workshops for immigrants to express themselves
- Research into needs of Black Caribbean youth
- E-mail/internet service for French Africans
- Guide to tourist attractions
- Braille newsletter

### Disabled People
- Support groups
- Club for visually impaired people
- Disability awareness in churches

### Parents
- Group for parents of children with speech disorders

In looking at the activities of the ‘less experienced’ sub-group we found a difference: a higher proportion (nearly one in three) were pursuing community information projects, and slightly more sports/exercise and health care and fewer arts/crafts/hobbies and community involvement. The proportion - half - pursuing projects relating to learning was the same as for the whole set of Champions surveyed.

### 3.2 Who are the beneficiaries of projects pursued by Community Champions?

There were wide variations too in the people whom the Community Champions were seeking to benefit (Fig 9). A substantial proportion of Champions (43%) were seeking outcomes for the community at large (in a given locality), while young people - school age (24%) and 16-25 year olds (22%) constituted the main focus for considerable numbers of Champions.

Other target groups of note were black and minority ethnic groups (16%), disabled people (11%), over 50s (11%) and parents (10%).
3.3 How are Community Champions grants being used?

The uses to which Community Champions funds were put covered a remarkable range - which reflects the desire in the programme design to free up possibilities rather than constrain them\(^\text{10}\).

Predominant uses (Fig 10) were:

- purchasing equipment (46\%)\(^\text{11}\)
- developing projects (41\%) (expenditures instrumental to developing or running a project, eg, hiring a hall, paying for travel, etc)
- attending events or short courses (27\%)
- providing training for others (25\%)
- producing a newsletter (23\%)
- removing barriers to training (eg, meeting childcare costs) (22\%)

Other notable uses included organising events to involve local people (18\%), preparing a bid (16\%), and organising volunteers (11\%). (Again, Community Champions may put their grant to more than one use.)

---

\(^{10}\) Community Champions funding is not to be used for core organisational funding, activities of a political or predominantly religious nature, continuation of existing projects, business start-up, large capital items (equipment costing over £1,000) or paid community workers.

\(^{11}\) We found some evidence of Community Champions who found the programme a ready source of funds for purchasing equipment, and who did not place much importance on learning outcomes. There is a danger that the programme can be seen in some eyes as just another pot of money, rather than one with learning goals. A quarter of all respondents gave ‘purchase of equipment’ as the sole use of their Community Champions grant.
Fig 10

Uses of Community Champions funding (Q.6)

Examples of equipment purchased included:

- toys
- sewing machine
- sports equipment
- projector screen, speakers
- video camera
- display materials
- TV & VCR
- recording equipment
- kitchen equipment
- pool table
- musical instruments
- computer & peripherals
- books
- photocopier
- digital camera

How much is the Community Champions grant?

The DfES Guidance on Community Champions suggests that awards should normally be under £2,000. However, nearly two out of every five awards exceeded this figure, up to the limit of £3,000 (Fig 11). As anticipated in the programme design, there were also smaller awards (11% under £500, and 11% between (£500 and £999).
What other funding have Community Champions obtained?

Some 44% of Community Champions have secured funding from sources beyond their Community Champions award (Fig 12).

The timing of this has varied (Fig 13): sometimes before Community Champions support has been offered (14% of all Champions), sometimes after (20%), sometimes both before and after (7%) or at the same time (2%).
Fig 13

Sources used (Fig 14) include the Lottery Funds (32% of those receiving funding), local authorities (27%), and local charities (23%). RDA/ Single Regeneration Budget programmes were accessed by 15% programmes, while 13% attracted business sponsorship and 10%, funding from national charities.

Fig 14
Specific additional sources include:

### Table 5 Other sources of funding accessed by Community Champions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lottery Funds</th>
<th>National charities &amp; foundations</th>
<th>Government agencies &amp; programmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Opportunities Fund</td>
<td>Northern Rock Foundation</td>
<td>Community Chest (Neighbourhood Renewal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Fund</td>
<td>Princes Trust</td>
<td>Single Regeneration Budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning and Skills Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sport England</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community Empowerment Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennium Awards</td>
<td>Lloyds TSB Foundation</td>
<td>New Deal for Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lottery Heritage Fund</td>
<td>Shell Better Britain</td>
<td>Health Action Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awards for All</td>
<td>Children In Need</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It is worth noting the presence too of regional or sub-regional bodies amongst funding sources, such as Community Foundations (at city or county level); regional charities (like Peabody Trust and Bridge House Estates Trust Fund in London; Mercury Action Trust in Leicestershire). Several community foundations feature as intermediaries for Community Champions (most notably in the East Midlands, where they are the only form of intermediary) There are also some foundations linked to national companies which have a specific geographical focus, eg, the Boots Charitable Trust in Nottingham.

## 4 Achievements by Community Champions

### 4.1 What do Community Champions feel they have achieved?

Nearly half (48%) of all the Community Champions described what they had achieved with the assistance of the programme in terms of realising their project goals (Fig 15). Nearly two in five (37%) commented that they were able to meet community needs. For 15% the achievement was personal, and for 9% it lay in team working and networking.

For a proportion (about 20%), it was difficult to attribute achievements specifically to the Community Champions grant, as this was not the only, nor largest source of funding for what they had set out to do.
4.2 What have Community Champions gained personally?

We asked all interviewees what they gained personally from their activities supported by the Community Champions fund (Fig 16). For two-thirds, the clearest benefits related to *increased confidence and self-esteem* - in keeping with the intent behind Community Champions - and *satisfaction from helping others*.

Lower ranked but significant gains included:

- meeting new people/ useful contacts (25%)
- money to do something useful (24%)
- recognition and respect (23%)
- greater awareness of what is possible (22%)

The ability to get further funding was also seen as a *personal* benefit, important where people have great attachment to what they are doing and want resources to be able to continue and develop their project.
Typical comments made by interviewees included:

“I had time on my hands, I wanted to feel useful. I’ve always been a one that, you know, if you have a photograph taken, I’ve stayed at the back, you know, I’ve never been one to push myself forward. And through applying to Community Champions and other groups that I’ve joined, I’ve also gone on training courses, I’ve also spoken up at meetings about what we’ve done. Now, none of this I would have done before.

“When people back you, you’ve got that bit more confidence. You know, you feel as though you’re worthy.”

VALERIE BARKER, HALIFAX (TOOL LIBRARY)

“I wanted to prove that we can do things, we are not just disabled, that’s it really… I am more confident that I can talk to people and that people are listening to what I am saying.”

AMAR DEHAR, WOLVERHAMPTON (WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL)

“I think it’s because I actually lived here and got fed up with the moaning and looking at things and being a moaner myself. It never occurred to me that it would get this big.

“Before I started I was agoraphobic. I still suffer from it, but to a very small degree. I don’t have too big a problem with confidence now. Learning skills, I use the computers, “I wouldn’t even have looked at one before. I hadn’t had any office training or anything. I now do the books, keep the minutes and everything else. These are things I had never thought about before.”

MARGARET RINGER, SLOUGH (COMMUNITY FLATS)
5 Learning and Skills

Investigating skills gained

In conducting the survey, we tackled the learning and skills needed and gained from a number of different angles, recognising that often people do not readily think about what they know or need to know, or the skills they have or need to have.

Our approach was to ask, at different points in the questionnaire:

- what is the most important thing you have learnt as a result of what you have done with the help of the Community Champions grant?
- what do you feel that you are now more capable of doing (eg, in turning ideas into action, involving the community, managing or organising projects, or getting resources)?
- What do you know more about in developing community activities, eg, about local needs, sources of funding, or good ways of doing things?
- How has your experience changed the way in which you do things, eg, in how you deal with funding organisations and officialdom in general?

We set out our findings to these questions in this Chapter.

Further questions, looking forward and looking back, also shed light on skills needed. Responses to these are covered in Chapters 6 and 7:

- Are you undertaking or planning any further learning or training which will help you in this?
- Is there any further learning, training or other support would help you?
- Looking back, is there anything you wish you’d known or had been able to do when you started?

At the end of this Chapter we link our analysis to the Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Framework, reflecting on the differences between participants on the Community Champions programme and requirements for resident-led regeneration.

5.1 The most important thing learnt by Community Champions

In the interviews our first question on learning and skills was to ask what was the most important thing that the Community Champion had learnt (Fig 17).

Most prominent sets of responses can be grouped under the headings of:

- understanding funding organisations (32%)
- community needs (32%)
- organisational skills (22%)
- team working and networking (17%)
- personal skills (12%)
Table 6 below summarises typical comments:

### Table 6  Examples of the ‘most important things’ learnt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding funding organisations</th>
<th>Community needs</th>
<th>Organisational skills</th>
<th>Team working and networking</th>
<th>Personal skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• that support and funds are available</td>
<td>• how to help bring the community together</td>
<td>• can’t do everything oneself, or predict and plan everything</td>
<td>• team building</td>
<td>• making presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• understanding where they are coming from</td>
<td>• awareness of needs of other communities</td>
<td>• having clear objectives</td>
<td>• chairing</td>
<td>• IT skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• managing money</td>
<td></td>
<td>• research skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• making presentations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- making bids
- know who to go to
- that people will listen
- how easy/difficult it is to raise funds
- understanding
- how to solve community problems
- time management
- more realistic expectations
- be prepared for the obvious hurdles
- project management
- business planning
- working out funds needed
- organising events
- organising volunteers
- what’s involved
- leading a workshop
- building relationships and trust
- sharing experiences and difficulties with others
- appreciating other people more
- perseverance
- better communications skills
5.2 Increased capability

We then asked what Community Champions felt they were now more capable of doing. The overall picture is one where the main gains relate to capabilities we have grouped as ‘turning ideas into action’ and ‘working with the community’. Fig 18 gives the total of (multiple) responses made by Community Champions regarding what they felt more capable of doing. This provides a picture of the relative weights of the types of learning which Champions readily identify - much more to do with what excited them in developing their specific project than more general skills to do with project management disciplines and building relationships.

The following four charts take each of our four broad themes under the topic of Increased Capability: ‘turning ideas into action’, ‘working with the community’, ‘managing projects’ and ‘dealing with partners and funders’. (These charts revert to showing percentages of the total population.) In relation to ‘Turning ideas into action’ (Fig 18a), developing project ideas was cited by 75% of Champions, with networking and researching community needs being the next two most prominent skills. The following quote gives one example of improved networking and spotting opportunities combined:

“I know there is more information available now. It was like looking for a needle in a haystack when you first start and you don’t know what’s out there and once you start it is like opening a door. The more information you get just opens the door wider. Also, as we are going on, we are speaking to different people, it’s having a knock on effect, they are saying ‘Oh well, I know so and so, have you spoken to them?’ It is leading from one thing to another.” DENISE HOLYHEAD, ROTHERHAM

12 Needs researched included ways of helping ‘problem’ children, baby clinics, breakfast club, disabled access, equipment for children’s play area, community garden, and IT facilities.
In relation to working with the community (Fig 18b), the main gains related to greater ability to motivate others, to communicate, raise interest and awareness and help others to help themselves, including through helping them develop their skills.

Of those citing greater ability to manage projects (Fig 18c), the main gains related to project management in general (32%), with around 10% of all respondents highlighting aspects of business planning and financial management.
In our analysis of the ‘less experienced’ sub-group of Community Champions we found similar patterns of increased capabilities. However, a higher proportion of this group appear to have gained more in relation to managing projects (43%, compared to 32%) and developing business/ action plans (23%, compared to 10%) through the programme.

With regard to dealing with partners and funders (Fig 18d), the main gains amongst the full group of Community Champions related to seeking other sources of funding (22%), with 9% also noting how they are better able to represent local needs and views.
Examples of how people feel more capable in dealing with funders and partners include:

“I’ve learnt there’s a lot of funding available especially for areas that are like ours.”
VALERIE BARKER, HALIFAX (TOOL LIBRARY)

“I’ve gained more skills in dealing with people. For example, when a person comes up to you and goes, ‘I don’t think that you should have that’, you are able to say, ‘well, you know, tell me why not and this is why we want it’ and then say, ‘okay, I respect your opinion’, whereas perhaps at the beginning, you would have been hurt or upset by what they said.”
SHARON MITCHELL, WEYMOUTH (CHILDREN’S SKATING AREA)

5.3 Increased knowledge

We also asked interviewees about knowledge they had gained (Fig 19). Most prominent was knowledge about community needs (57%) and funding sources (56%), followed by three closely related categories: people to contact (36%), where to go for advice and information (36%), and local organisations (35%).

The pattern of knowledge gained by the less experienced group shows that funding sources was the most significant category (for two-thirds), followed by community needs (just over half). The other main difference to the full group was that one in five, rather than one in ten, gained greater knowledge of possibilities for action.
5.4 Different approaches adopted

The main areas where Community Champions had changed their approach (Fig 20) as a result of their experience or learning undertaken were:

- dealing with funders (37%)
- personal skills (30%)
- business planning (10%) and organisational skills (7%) which related to the development of their project.

Table 7 summarises the main areas of where interviewees reported taking different approaches. In some cases their responses related more to their skills and behaviours in how they applied the knowledge they gained. This enabled them to expand the project into wider communities or even regional areas, as well as give them ideas for similar related projects to augment the current one.

Table 7  Examples of changed approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dealing with funders</th>
<th>Personal skills</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>know how to deal with</td>
<td>understand correct</td>
<td>more proactive/ know best places to go for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the professionals</td>
<td>procedures/ funder</td>
<td>funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understanding their</td>
<td>requirements</td>
<td>greater profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>language</td>
<td>more assertive &amp;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more professional</td>
<td>persistent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more sceptical attitude</td>
<td>time management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in dealing with others</td>
<td>written communications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more positive attitude in</td>
<td>(including bids,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dealing with others</td>
<td>newsletters)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>research techniques</td>
<td>self-expression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>case in not making</td>
<td>care in not making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in flexible commitments</td>
<td>inflexible commitments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Skills for Regeneration: Learning by Community Champions

- ability to do more
- more analytical

**Organisational skills**
- business planning
- organisation skills in general
- adopting a constitution
- greater ability to identify and meet community needs
- problem solving
- tailoring courses to learner needs
- managing finances
- understanding what works and what doesn’t
- organisation skills in general
- adopting a constitution
- greater ability to identify and meet community needs
- keeping records/monitoring costs
- marketing

Illustrations from interviewees included:

“It isn’t a case that you can just say, oh good, they’ve given us the money, we can open up. There’s a heck of a lot of things that you have to do. You have to look for insurance, that is our biggest problem, not a lot of insurers want to insure.”

VALERIE BARKER, HALIFAX (TOOL LIBRARY)

“The first course was a two day course where you’re taken through the whole business of how to make a funding application, where all the information is kept, the fact that there are websites and there’s a scheme called Funder Finder.

“The important thing is talking with a group of others, some of whom have quite a bit of experience whilst others are starting from scratch. Talking about what was a successful appeal and you’re hearing about the general climate of grant making trusts. “The fact that they have fewer funds now to give away and all that sort of thing, because of the collapse in the stock market. So, it’s pulling all of those strands together and looking at examples of what is a good strategy for a particular size of organisation and what are good applications and what aren’t and how you might keep records of all of this and so on.

“Then how to court your grant making trust, in other words you follow up with letters and pictures of what you’ve done with their money and all that sort of thing. Now, a lot of it is common sense, but you need to have it sort of spelt out to you by people who’ve been through all of this.

JOHN BETTRIDGE, BISHOPTHORPE

### 5.5 Skills and knowledge passed on to others

Given that the underlying objectives of the Community Champions programme include transferring learning and skills within communities and spreading good practice about regeneration, we also asked interviewees about what skills and knowledge they have passed on to others (Fig 21).
The principal themes where Community Champions have passed on skills and knowledge to others were in relation to training others in community development and regeneration (22%), passing on practical skills in running and developing the project, such as sports coaching; office skills, etc (21%), and passing on knowledge of funding opportunities and procedures (20%). Secondary themes were communication skills (12%), organisational skills (12%), team working and networking (11%) and personal skills (11%).

In some cases, what they have passed on is less about specific skills or knowledge but rather confidence, through demonstrating what’s possible and what can actually be achieved. Champions have instilled positive thinking, encouraged enthusiasm, belief in others and self-belief amongst members of their groups.

Table 8 below summarises the types of responses under the various headings:

**Table 8 Examples of skills and knowledge passed on to others**

**Community development and regeneration**
- experience of what works and doesn’t work
- how to identify needs
- how to look beyond immediate needs/ lateral thinking
- where to go for support and advice
- tolerance of people from other cultures, backgrounds
- how to involve particular groups (eg, parents, teachers, young people)

**Practical skills**
- work experience
- specific arts and crafts, photography
- specific sports
- computer skills
- dealing with practical problems of user groups (eg, people with mental health problems)

**Funding opportunities and procedures**
- advising on funds available and how to apply (including EU sources)
Communication
- interpersonal communications
- production of booklets and newsletters
- presentation skills
- letter and CV writing
- communicating with different age groups
- listening and not judging people

Organisational skills
- setting up a club
- managing projects
- managing people/volunteers
- research
- administration
- running courses and events

Team working and networking
- team building skills
- working as part of a team
- networking
- coaching others

Personal skills
- assertiveness
- mentoring others

Amongst the less experienced group, a far lower proportion (only one in 20) passed on skills and knowledge relating to training others - which might be a function of their having less experience in the first place. Organisational and team working skills ranked slightly more prominently (one in six said this).

5.6 Links with the Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Framework

The picture painted above by the responses to the questions about capabilities, knowledge and changed approaches and behaviours links to the Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Framework, set out in Chapter 1.

Table 9 below takes the headings within the framework and relates these to the skills gained by Community Champions.

Table 9 Commentary on Community Champions and the Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building the knowledge base</th>
<th>Building the knowledge base</th>
<th>Recognising and understanding what works in housing and the built environment, education, worklessness, crime and health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some Community Champions have taken the opportunity to find out what works in other communities, through visits and exchanges. Most will have learnt from their own experience, ‘by doing’, though not necessarily in ways which draw on good practice elsewhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The limited support available to most Community Champions reduces the likelihood that Champions will draw on the body of ‘what works’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There are very good examples, however, where Community Champions has enabled individuals to attend courses and conferences which have ‘opened their eyes’, developed their knowledge and built their confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A significant proportion (57%) have gained a better understanding of community needs as a result of their Community Champions-funded activities. Some 32% cite this in relation to the most important thing they have learnt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Skills for Regeneration: Learning by Community Champions

The majority of Community Champions have a ‘project’ to implement (rather than using their grant simply for course fees or a study visit). Again, they ‘learn by doing’, though primarily with a local focus rather than drawing on the wider knowledge base.

Developing skills

- Applying knowledge
  - Analysing problems, creating opportunities, designing solutions from the knowledge base
  - The majority of Community Champions have a ‘project’ to implement (rather than using their grant simply for course fees or a study visit). Again, they ‘learn by doing’, though primarily with a local focus rather than drawing on the wider knowledge base.

- Organisational skills
  - Project appraisal and management, finance and budgeting, mainstreaming resources, monitoring and evaluation, risk assessment and management research
  - The small-scale nature of the activities pursued by Community Champions tends to mean that there are limited demands on their management and organisational skills. That said, management skills and business planning are themes raised when discussing future learning needs, and ability to manage volunteers is a fairly common requirement. What comes over strongly from the experience of Community Champions is the importance of skills in obtaining funding - critical for the majority who want to continue or expand their community activities.

- Interpersonal skills
  - Community engagement, leadership, management of people, valuing diversity, conflict resolution, partnership working, communication
  - Of these skills, the most significant gains for Community Champions have related to communication skills and community engagement. There are cases where people have learnt something about partnership - especially about who you need to involve early in a project if it is to succeed.

Changing behaviours

- Entrepreneurial behaviours
  - Problem solving, spotting opportunities, taking calculated risks, a ‘can do’ philosophy
  - There are many examples amongst the Community Champions surveyed of entrepreneurial behaviours, as many involve new projects.

- Reflective behaviours
  - Evaluating effectiveness, exploring reasons for success, learning from failure
  - The interviews provide considerable evidence of Community Champions learning from their experience, though for many this was something prompted by the interview process rather than something that they have consciously been doing.


The essential distinction is that our survey indicates that the skill requirements of Community Champions are in most respects at a more basic level than those set out for ‘residents’ in the Renewal Framework (see Table 2). This is understandable because those in the Framework relate to a fuller skill set which goes beyond setting up and running small community projects to encompass the complexity of working in
regeneration partnerships and potentially sharing responsibilities for decision-making and resources.

What the Community Champions programme tends to engender is the development of the more basic, project-related skills, a platform to get further involved in community development and regeneration, and importantly, the essential confidence to do so.

6 Support to Community Champions

6.1 Support accessed by Community Champions

We asked interviewees about the support they received as part of their involvement with Community Champions and what they valued in this. Because of the devolved administration of the programme, Champions did not all have the same range of support on offer. The funds available to intermediaries limited the support they could provide, except where some were able to combine resources from a number of funders to provide a more integrated service. In practice most support they provided was before or at the application stage.

Champions commented on other sources of support, including friends and colleagues, other organisations providing information and advice such as Councils of Voluntary Service (CVSs) and local authorities. Some talked of information and support before applying as well after they had been granted their funding.

The interviews suggested that many Champions found out about the programme directly through CVSs and local authorities, events on funding they organised, and Funderfinder13 (a subscription service tailored to needs in the community and voluntary sector). Many Champions found out about the programme through their own use of the Internet.

In some areas, however, support at the pre-application stage was not on hand, as this interviewee commented:

“It would have been nice to have somebody who would say, well, at the moment, this, this and this is worth applying for, worth trying... I know some borough councils do have people like this - a something development officer, like a community development officer or community worker, and we didn’t seem to have that within ours.”

SHARON MITCHELL, WEYMOUTH (CHILDREN’S SKATING AREA)

Forms of support (Fig 22) included:

- ‘personal contact’: a telephone call with or visit from the Community Champions intermediary organisation (19%)
- ‘guidance’ in filling in the form (from the Community Champions intermediary organisation or another body) (16%)
- ‘information’ (eg, where to go for information, advice, or other sources of funding relating to their specific project) (9%)

13 See www.funderfinder.org.uk
• ‘seminar’, an event about Community Champions (and in some cases, other sources of funding as well) (10%)
• ‘support’, ie, other advice relevant to developing and running their project (31%)

Many respondents were quite vague about the support they had received and from whom they had received it.
Three out of 10 either stated that they had no support at all, or did not find what support they had very helpful. In many cases where there was no support, this was because the Community Champions did not seek it, where, for instance, their use of the Community Champions fund was very instrumental, eg, to buy a piece of equipment.
“They laid on a terrific meeting with speakers from different government departments, different grant bodies… I picked up all sorts of tips. It was largely how to apply for extra grants and how to do all sorts of things and speakers came up. Community Champions were highlighted and invited to show what they had done and that was enormously beneficial. It was really awfully well arranged do.”

A COMMUNITY CHAMPION IN EASTERN REGION (LOCAL HISTORY)

A consistent set of comments came through from the case study interviews: just how much liked the application form was, especially compared to those of other bodies: “When some of them send you their forms they are just so completely overwhelming. It's almost like they want a business plan”.

Some Champions were helped in completing the form; most found it very straightforward.

“Some people are good on paper and good with forms and so on and they will know instinctively how to put their case. I think there are many others who have got a super idea, but they're perhaps not very good at getting it down on paper and they, I think, would need to go and find someone to give them a bit of help.”

“Because I know from all of these funding bids and so on, it's how you write them that's important, not so much the idea, not so much your project, but it's putting it over in a convincing way.”

JOHN BETTRIDGE, BISHOPTHORPE (MENTAL HEALTH CHARITY)

Several could have gone to a meeting before or after obtaining the grant, but did not. Those that did seem to have learnt something valuable, made new contacts and/ or been inspired by what others have done.

6.2 Value of information and support

There were reasonably high levels of satisfaction with information and support provided, with 55% rating what they obtained as ‘very useful' and a further 17% ‘useful'. Only 10% found the information and support ‘not at all useful'.
6.3 ‘If I’d known then what I know now…’

The final question in the telephone survey was to ask, “looking back, is there anything you wish you’d known or had been able to do when you started?”. We hoped that this might elicit some fresh information on the skills and knowledge needed by Community Champions and reflections on their learning, information and support needs when embarking on the programme.

The most prominent sets of responses tended to be grouped around needs to know more about funding sources (14%) and wishing they had heard about Community Champions earlier (or had asked for, or been given more money) (8%). Some wished that they had been more aware of the time that would elapse before they received their funding (10%), or of the difficulties they were likely to encounter with their community project (8%). For 6%, the issue was more to do with a lack of prior training or knowledge relating to running their particular project.
Fig 24

Prior knowledge or skills that would have helped (Q.21)

Table 10 summarises typical comments.

**Table 10 Responses to ‘Looking back, I wish I had...’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Looking back, I wish I had ...</th>
<th>Looking back, I wish I had ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>known about Community Champions earlier</td>
<td>known that support was available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>started sooner</td>
<td>been less daunted: “everything was scary - I didn’t know anything”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>known more about staffing policies</td>
<td>known not to rush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>done more planning/ anticipated pitfalls</td>
<td>built relationships with organisations before I had started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asked for more money</td>
<td>been aware of responsibilities as a committee member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had more management knowledge/</td>
<td>been readier to delegate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had more financial training/ understood funding complexities</td>
<td>known how to design leaflets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>budgeted more for advertising</td>
<td>been computer literate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>been more realistic</td>
<td>known how popular the project was going to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>known where else to go for money</td>
<td>known the pleasure I’d gain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>known how hard it would be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>known more about working with different ethnic minorities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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46
6.4 Suggestions for improving the Community Champions programme

We asked interviewees to suggest improvements to the Community Champions which would help people like themselves in the future.

Fig 24

The main suggestions they offered related first to money, secondly to publicity for the programme, and thirdly to guidance and support. Comments reflected regional and sub-regional variations in how the Community Champions programme is administered and the amount and nature of any support provided by the relevant intermediary. Several of the suggestions are already practised by individual intermediary organisations.

Just over a quarter of interviewees made suggestions about further funding, stemming mainly from their personal situation. Prominent responses included:

- Some called for continuous funding or core funding, say for three years, from Community Champions.
- Some wished they had either asked for more in the first place, or had been given what they had requested.
- Some would like Community Champions to fund further projects they want to pursue.
- Others want more information about alternative sources of funding.
- A few would have preferred to have had their money upfront, before they had undertaken any expenditure. A minority mentioned that they had had to use their own money (especially for training courses) and the Community Champions grant took as long as six weeks to materialise.
Those commenting on publicity (17%) felt that more should be done to spread the word more about Community Champions, believing that many more people would benefit if only they were aware of the opportunity.  

On guidance and support,

**pre-application**
- A few would have welcomed more help with the application form.
- Several felt that the guidance and/or award criteria were too vague, and that there needed to be more targeting of the funds (they were too easy to get...)
- Others suggested that a sample project list would help people think about the best what to propose (say, on the Community Champions website: [www.dfes.gov.uk/communitychampions.](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/communitychampions))

**during their project/activity**
- Some called for closer, one-to-one contact/periodic follow-up.
- There were requests for help with management/presentation skills, and for advice on how to monitor progress
- Regular updates on projects or a newsletter were also proposed; also opportunities to share experience with similar projects
- Other suggestions included training seminars, including on fundraising (done in some areas), project development, assertiveness

In a few cases, Champions argued for the provision of interpreters for people whose first language is not English.

From the interviews and case studies we observe a latent need which concerns the efficacy of Community Champions: cases where Community Champions find themselves 'high and dry' with no clear route to progressing their community activities and/or securing further funding, which has been the consequence of the Champion's own lack of experience and a lack of advice or support.

The box below illustrates how one of the Community Champion intermediary organisations is developing the support it can offer people like Community Champions.

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14 We know from our contacts with intermediaries that some have been reluctant to promote the programme too widely, for fear of being substantially over-subscribed.
### Scarman Trust: Pioneering New Forms of Support for Community Champion-type Activity

Using other sources of funding relating to the Community Champions programme, the Scarman Trust will pioneer a wide range of new support services that could be extended to other community champions and community groups more widely. This support will include:

- Resource sharing via a simple-to-use website database where details of resources offered or needed can be entered
- Knowledge sharing through two knowledge management systems for community action - the Fact Bank and Tools for Community Regeneration
- Power Tools - available through Tools for Community Regeneration and supported by ‘10 minute lesson plans’ that all staff and associates will be trained over time to deliver within a format which may be accredited
- Survey Tools aimed at encouraging community champions to make the most effective use of local assets, both to get their projects off the ground and to sustain them in the future after the initial grant has been spent
- Coaches providing support for generic business planning - leading award winners through the process rather than doing it for them; also coaches with specific subject expertise
- Networking Days to include training, networking, celebration and advocacy work
- Phone conferences/e-groups with input from coaches or outside specialists
- Learning Needs Analysis and Learning Brokerage to provide a process of brokering learning from the most appropriate source

### 6.5 Advice to prospective Community Champions

We asked the 20 case study interviewees what advice they had to offer others who might be considering Community Champions. Many said ‘go for it’, or something similar, and almost all had some tip to suggest relating to funding - which when pulled together provide elements of a Good Practice Guide:

“The biggest tip I got from the meetings I went to was that you must use the right grant giver and you must find out what they want…They’ve all got their own extraordinary rules.”
A COMMUNITY CHAMPION IN EASTERN REGION (LOCAL HISTORY)

“I’ve learnt that you’ve got to find out first you’ve got to find out what is what, and make sure you talk to the right people.
PARTICK MARKLAND (CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY)

“If they’ve thought up something they’d love to do and it would benefit other people, go ahead, go and ask for it, because Champions give you help.”

“At the beginning they’d need to try and put down their ideas clearly on paper. If it isn’t feasible, there is help locally.
“ Their chances of success rest on a good application form with their idea put in a few line - because Community Champions is not big sheets of paper that you have to fill in.”
VALERIE BARKER, HALIFAX (TOOL LIBRARY)
“Some people are good on paper and good with forms and so on and they will know instinctively how to put their case. I think there are many others who have got a super idea, but they’re perhaps not very good at getting it down on paper and they, I think, would need to go and find someone to give them a bit of help.

“Because I know from all of these funding bids and so on, it’s how you write them that’s important, not so much the idea, not so much your project, but it’s putting it over in a convincing way.”

JOHN BETTRIDGE, BISHOPTORPE (MENTAL HEALTH CHARITY)

“They need to know at whom they’re going to aim the course, so do their research first, properly.”

NIGEL CRAIG, ST HELENS (ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING)

“They need to know their target, why they are targeting it, if they can reach the target and the target people they are targeting. That is the most important thing. And how you are going to reach the target people.”

JON BRISTOL, LONDON (PRE-PRODUCTION MUSIC STUDIO)

“They need to know how much their things are going to cost before asking for any money. Say if they were in my situation, they would want to know how much the wheelchairs are, how much the kit would cost, how much the ball costs, etc.”

AMAR DEHAR, WOLVERHAMPTON (WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL)

“Think about what they want to do and make an effective plan and to measure it to the budgets to cover the overrun.”

MOSES RAIMUNDO, GATESHEAD (SUPPORT FOR ANGOLAN REFUGEES)

“It’s important to try and put oneself in the shoes of the funder and understand that there needs to be some sort of measurable outcome. So often a good idea is just a good idea. If someone is going to carry on getting funding to support a project, we always have to keep our eyes on what are the outcomes and are they results that people will understand and relate to and feel disposed towards.”

“Understanding what the funding requirements are, the funding criteria, is really important and will make a difference later on to their success in getting the funding.”

KEITH HANCOCK, NORTHUMBERLAND (MENTAL HEALTH)

“Prospective applicants should go onto the Community Champions website and see what other communities have got funding for.”

MARGARET RINGER, SLOUGH (COMMUNITY FLATS)
7 Plans of Community Champions

We asked Community Champions about what they had done since they had completed their Community Champions-related project, about their plans for further involvement in community projects, and about their needs for further learning or support.

7.1 Further involvement in community projects

Over half the Community Champions were carrying on with their projects, and a further quarter were wanting to expand these. Some 13% were planning new projects. Some could go no further because the funding was a one-off, and they had not found any alternative.

![Fig 25]

Table 11 illustrates future plans of Community Champions.

Table 11 Future Plans of Community Champions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project/ group</th>
<th>Nature of involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>youth football team</td>
<td>action research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mobile/ special needs crèche</td>
<td>forum (adult; youth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community centre</td>
<td>film based around the Sikh community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turn tenants association into a charity</td>
<td>party for the elderly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>develop job opportunities for group members</td>
<td>after-school club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new father and son group</td>
<td>Sri Lankan community association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>widen project audience</td>
<td>youth orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>annual awards dinner</td>
<td>website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT literacy courses for parents</td>
<td>outdoor bowls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>counselling service (eg, bereavement; women who have been attacked; ethnic minority women)</td>
<td>negotiate a long term lease for the community garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>audit disabled access to public buildings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[51]
Skills for Regeneration: Learning by Community Champions

- children’s play area
- involvement in ‘Blind Week’
- service improvements (eg, longer opening hours)
- parenting classes

Personal
- make it a career
- offer consultancy in the voluntary sector
- further training (eg, in regeneration; teaching: alternative medicine; volunteer trainer)

- play group
- healthy living centre

- a job
- become a councillor
- join Community Champions panel as a ‘grants officiator’

Amongst the less experienced group of Community Champions, there was a higher proportion of people proposing to develop new projects (one in five), and a lower proportion intending to continue their projects (one in three compared to one in two). The same proportion, one quarter, intended to expand their existing project.

7.2 Further learning - needs and action taken

We found that 20% Community Champions were currently undertaking further learning, and 33% planning to do so (Fig 26). However, 44% had not undertaken further learning or were planning any.

Fig 26

There did not appear to be a huge demand for formal courses amongst Community Champions, but there was significant interest in further learning (Fig 27).
Examples of learning being undertaken or planned include:

Table 12  Examples of further learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Further Learning Undertaken or Planned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>managing people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participative action research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial management/ book-keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regeneration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tutors/ assessors/ Further and Adult Education Teacher’s Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>youth leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management (including small business courses)/ leadership/ business planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>report writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NVQs in Early Years &amp; Childcare, and care management (Level 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preparing members to become trustees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chairing meetings/ committee skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>publicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assertiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>web design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ a few pursuing degrees… (an assortment: social and community studies; engineering, social work, psychology, law)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 27

Further learning required by Community Champions

Examples of learning being undertaken or planned include:

Table 12  Examples of further learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 27

Further learning required by Community Champions
8 Conclusions

8.1 Meeting the objectives of the Community Champions programme

While the ‘Skills for Regeneration’ research project has not sought to evaluate the Community Champions programme as such, it is worth first reflecting on what we have found in relation to the programme objectives and expectations, described in Chapter 1. The survey provides evidence of how the Community Champions fund is being used, to the benefit of individuals and groups, broadly in keeping with the programme objectives.

Background of Community Champions

The majority of Community Champions have had significant previous experience in voluntary or community activities, including in leadership roles. The programme has been less successful in meeting its aspirations in engaging people completely new to small-scale regeneration.

The programme has, however, been very successful in reaching Black and Minority Ethnic communities, with proportions of take-up amongst Black Caribbean and Black African groups being three times their presence in the population as a whole.

Two out of three Community Champions were graduates or qualified to A level, technician or supervisory levels. This compares to only 28% in the population as a whole. We take this as a proxy for the skills base of Community Champions, in that it suggests certain prior abilities on the part of many Champions, not least to do with the ability to seek and analyse information. This does not mean, however, that this made them especially well-equipped for community-led regeneration, as much depends on organisational and interpersonal skills and entrepreneurial behaviours (as highlighted by the Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Framework - see Section 1.4).

That there was relatively high take-up amongst individuals who have qualifications and already have significant previous experience in community activities and volunteering is a concern but does not run against the principles behind Community Champions, provided that their projects benefit a wider range of people and they pass on their knowledge, skills and experience to others.

Projects pursued by Community Champions

The Community Champions fund was being put to a wide variety of purposes, including (but going well beyond) the indicative uses set out in the DfES guidance to Government Offices (see Appendix A). Projects pursued by Champions fell within a very broad definition of ‘regeneration’, largely synonymous with community development.

Learning objectives featured prominently for many Champions (50%), though in many other cases the Community Champions did not make these explicit when asked. To make the comparison with parallel Neighbourhood Renewal Unit programmes\(^\text{15}\), Community Champions seems to mirror Community Chest and

\(^{15}\) See Appendix E.
Community Learning Chest with the distinction that the focus of Community Champions is primarily on *individuals* rather than groups. Examples of learning activities promoted by Champions for themselves and their groups included training for board members; visiting other countries to see how they mainstream disadvantaged minorities; attending national conferences (e.g., that of the Development Trusts Association); managing a credit union and management training for setting up a community garden.

The people whom the Community Champions were seeking to benefit vary widely too. A substantial proportion (43%) were seeking outcomes for the community at large (in a given locality), while young people - school age (24%) and 16-25 year olds (22%) constituted the main focus for considerable numbers of Champions. Other target groups of note are black and minority ethnic groups, disabled people, over 50s and parents.

The uses to which Community Champions grants were being put covered a remarkable range - which reflects the desire in the programme design to free up possibilities rather than constrain them. Predominant uses were purchasing equipment (46%) and other expenditures required in developing projects (41%); attending events or short courses (27%); providing training for others (25%); producing a newsletter (23%); and removing barriers to training, e.g., meeting childcare costs (22%). There were relatively few projects which address underlying goals for Community Champions about enabling community participation in regeneration partnerships.

Some 44% of Community Champions have secured funding from sources beyond their Community Champions award. Typical sources include the Lottery Funds (32% of those receiving other funding), local authorities (27%), and local charities (23%). There were cases where the Community Champions funding is a small part of total funding which has been secured for a project, but this may not necessarily have been expected when the original bid was submitted.

**Achievements and benefits**

Nearly half (48%) of all the Community Champions expressed what they achieved in terms of realising their project goals. Almost two in five commented that they had met community needs. The survey provides consistent evidence that the majority of Community Champions could not have achieved what they did without their grant.

For nearly two-thirds, the clearest *personal* benefits related to increased confidence and self-esteem and satisfaction from helping others. Knowledge of funding sources is important too: fundamental for many in enabling to pursue their projects further, projects to which they typically have a very strong personal attachment. Very few have pursued formal qualifications funded through the Community Champions programme.

There is little evidence that involvement in Community Champions has any real or perceived impact on employability and job prospects. Only four or five stated without a prompt that they had obtained a job or were more capable of seeking employment as a result of their Community Champions experience.

Drawbacks perceived by Community Champions relate to the predominantly one-off nature of the funding: it cannot offer funding for the continuation of successful
projects. This is an issue felt especially by Champions with little or no prior experience, and less familiar with fundraising and alternative sources to pursue.

8.2 Skills and knowledge needed and gained

A primary objective of the research has been to establish the skills gained by participants in the programme, the skills needed by local people for leading and taking part in regeneration projects, especially small scale community-based initiatives. Given that relatively few Champions pursued formal learning through the programme, the greatest gains arose through ‘learning by doing’.

Responses to the question, “What was the most important single thing you learnt?” can be grouped under the headings of understanding funding organisations (32%); community needs (32%); organisational skills (22%); team working and networking (17%); and personal skills (12%).

Community Champions felt especially that they are now more able to turn ideas into action (notably in developing project ideas). Respondents had gained a better understanding of community needs and knowledge of funding sources. The main areas where Community Champions had changed their approach were in dealing with funders (eg, better tailoring bids to funder requirements). The main skills and knowledge passed onto others focused on community development and regeneration (eg, training others and identifying sources of funding), practical skills (generic such as IT skills or specific to their project, eg, music or sports activities), and knowledge about funding opportunities and procedures.

Comparisons with the Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Framework

The learning gains indicated by Community Champions suggests a more fundamental level of skills required than the skill set described in the NRU’s Neighbourhood Skills and Learning Framework. Our survey suggests that Community Champions are not very connected to networks and bodies of knowledge about ‘what works’ in housing and the built environment, education, worklessness, crime and health - though this reflects the small scale, volunteering nature of the projects they pursue. There are very good examples, however, where Community Champion grants have enabled individuals to attend courses and conferences which have opened their eyes to what’s possible and works, and built their confidence.

The small scale nature of Community Champions also tends to mean that there are less sophisticated demands for management and organisational skills. That said, management skills and business planning are themes raised when discussing future learning needs, and ability to manage volunteers is a fairly common requirement. What comes over strongly from the experience of Community Champions is the importance of skills in obtaining funding - critical for the majority who want to continue or expand their community activities; along with skills in communicating and community involvement. There are cases too where people have learnt something about partnership - especially about who you need to involve early in a project if it is to succeed.
The less experienced Community Champions

From our separate analysis of Community Champions who had little or no prior experience of community activities or volunteering, we found that, in terms of capabilities, they gained relatively more in relation to managing projects and developing business/ action plans. They developed their knowledge relatively more in relation to funding sources, understanding of community needs and appreciation of possibilities for action. On the other hand, a far lower proportion were able to pass on skills and knowledge relating to training others - a function of their limited experience in the first place.

8.3 What next for Community Champions?

The research also looked at the plans of Community Champions. Over half the Community Champions are carrying on with their projects, and a quarter were wanting to expand these. Some 13% were planning new projects. Some could go no further because the funding was a one-off, and they have not found any alternative.

We found that one in five Community Champions were currently undertaking further learning, and a third planning to do so. However, 44% had not undertaken further learning or were planning any. There did not appear to be a huge demand for formal courses amongst Community Champions though there was some interest, eg, in management, community development and regeneration courses. There was greater interest in less formal learning opportunities, eg, short courses in funding, assertiveness, book-keeping, web design, and committee skills/ chairing.

8.4 Improving the Community Champions programme

While our project was not an evaluation of Community Champions processes and impact, we can draw some conclusions on potential improvements to the programme, as requested in our brief.

We sought the views of participants on potential improvements. More than a third (35%) were very satisfied with the overall support received from the Community Champions programme and could see no way in which it could be improved. Only 10% found the information and support ‘not at all useful’. Champions very much appreciated the straightforward application form, typically contrasting it pointedly with those of other bodies and programmes: “it’s just so refreshing that Community Champions is so easy and you know where you are with it” being a typical comment.

Individual Community Champions made a variety of suggestions for improving the programme. Just over a quarter of interviewees made suggestions about further funding, stemming mainly from their personal situation (notably arguing for more money). Others felt that the word should be spread more about Community Champions, believing that many more people would benefit if only they were aware of the opportunity.

On guidance and support, suggestions included more information about successful Champions and their projects (eg, on the Community Champions programme website at www.dfes.gov.uk/communitychampions; closer, one-to-one contact/ periodic follow-up; help with management and/or presentation skills; training seminars, including on fundraising and assertiveness; and use of interpreters for people whose first language is not English. Such support is already available to
Community Champions in some areas, but this is typically dependent on how well resourced and networked intermediaries are, beyond the funds they receive for running the programme. It is interesting to note how the Scarman Trust have built a variety of forms of support into the ‘You and Your Community’ awards scheme they administer. (Appendix E describes this and a number of related small grants schemes which may offer ‘next step’ funding for individual Community Champions.)

Overall, we have been struck in carrying out the survey by the numbers of interviewees for whom the Community Champions programme made a very real difference. We summarise strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in Table 13 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ease of application</td>
<td>• ability to do just about anything!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• open to individuals as well as groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• learning by doing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reaching BME groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• substantial evidence of increased confidence and learning, notably in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>developing project ideas, understanding community needs, accessing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funding and dealing with funders and officialdom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ability to do just about anything!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• fit with rationale/ targets (eg, limited evidence of progression to</td>
<td>• Champions left high and dry when their funding runs out - lack of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formal learning associated with regeneration and community development)</td>
<td>funding runs out - lack of information about where to go for further</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• proportion of graduates</td>
<td>funding and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• proportion with a great deal of experience of community activity</td>
<td>• The Community Champions programme being seen as just a pot of money,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• individual Champions left largely to their own devices</td>
<td>rather than clearly linked to learning and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ‘hit or miss’ nature of learning by doing, if the learning is unstructured and there is limited or no access to sources to experience and support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• cases of marginal benefit where Community Champions is a small part of project funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This analysis leads to arguments for greater efforts to target less experienced and less qualified potential Champions, and to ensure a more integrated approach linking with related funds and sources of community development support, with the objective of offering more and better routes for sustainable projects and greater learning gains, for the Champions and the groups they serve.
Appendix A

USES OF COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS FUNDING: Suggestions from DfES Guidance

**individuals**

- visiting other communities to share ideas and good practice whilst maintaining involvement in their core community activity
- accessing training of interest to help them develop their skills, eg, in giving presentations, managing projects, gathering information to help analyse the needs of their own and others’ communities
- developing bids for funding
- mentoring and guiding other groups and/or individuals
- facilitating others’ increased participation by helping them articulate their needs and identify possible solutions and then progress them

**community-inspired projects**

- enable individuals to access training of interest to them, eg, in community work etc through support with transport or childcare costs, developing outreach facilities, or offering training to smaller groups, etc
- help improve communities access to information
- provide support such as a mentor for individuals/groups after they have completed training, attended a workshop, got a paid/unpaid job etc to help them in the first few weeks or to help them progress their ideas
- carry out skills audits of residents to raise awareness of the resources already available to the community which can be built on, for example by developing more appropriate customised training, for improving the physical environment etc
- provide customised training for groups of residents so that it is more suited to their needs and enables them to compete more successfully for work by developing employability skills
- develop project management skills through small scale, specific projects arising from a clearly identified community need
- develop self-evaluation systems to improve projects’ effectiveness and be able to demonstrate this
- enable members of the community to carry out jobs previously done by people who did not live there, eg, who maybe have some key skills but who need a little more upskilling or additional qualifications, or confidence-building
- provide a means of progression, for individuals and communities, from initial activity towards full participation in taking their ideas forward or in accessing other learning or employment opportunities
- develop structures so that community groups can be brought into discussions on strategic planning and enabled to contribute effectively – the Community Champions fund can play a particularly important role in encouraging and developing involvement in Local Strategic Partnerships in those communities outside of the 88 NRF areas.
Appendix B

TELEPHONE QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION

My name is ………. from The Sharp End, a market research company. We are conducting research on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills into the Community Champions Fund. We understand that you have received a Community Champions grant in the past year or so. (CONFIRM)

The Department have given us your name and telephone number and we are calling to ask your assistance with this research, please.

The aim of the research is to find out:

• what you yourself have learned from being involved in Community Champions
• more about the skills people like you need to have in developing community activities

Your answers will help improve how the fund works in the future to benefit more people like yourself.

Your responses will be treated in confidence, and nothing you say will be passed on in any way that would identify you to either the Community Champions Fund organisers or the Department.

A. PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Name……………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

Employment Status:

Student □  Employed part-time □  Employed full-time □
Self-employed □  Unemployed □  Volunteer/ unpaid worker □
Homemaker □  Retired □
Unable to work due to sickness/ disability □

Age:  18-25 yrs □  26-49 yrs □  Over 50 yrs □

Gender:  Male □  Female □

What level of qualifications do you have? (not the subjects)

CODE highest level qualifications:

None □  GCSE/ O levels □  NVQ I or II □
NVQ III/ craft or technical □  A levels □  NVQ IV □
Degree/Postgraduate □  Professional □
Other …………………………………………………………………………… □
What ethnic group are you? PROBE ‘WHITE’ OR ‘MIXED’ OR OTHER, EG ASIAN

Ethnic group:

a) White
   - British
   - White other
   - White and Asian

b) Mixed
   - White and Black Caribbean
   - White and Black African
   - Other mixed

c) Asian or Asian British
   - Indian
   - Pakistani
   - Bangladeshi
   - Other Asian background

d) Black or Black British
   - Caribbean
   - African
   - Other black background

e) Chinese

f) Other ethnic group

B. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Q.1 I’d like to start by asking, how much experience did you have of voluntary or community activities before encountering Community Champions? Was it:

   - A great deal? □
   - Some? □
   - Very little? □
   - None at all? □

Q.2 What role(s) did you play in these activities?

TICK AS MANY AS APPLY

   - Leading community groups or initiatives
   - Member of a committee
   - Organising or helping to run an activity or an event
   - Raising or handling money
   - Giving advice, information or counselling
   - Giving other practical help
   - Other: ..............................................

Q.3 What specifically did you apply for Community Champions funding for? (What project or activity?) WRITE IN

................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

TICK APPROPRIATE BOX(ES) FOR THE MAIN THEME(S) INVOLVED IN THEIR COMMUNITY ACTIVITY:

   - Learning/ training
   - Health/ care
   - Sport/ exercise
   - Arts/ crafts/ hobbies
   - Community involvement
   - Community safety
   - Representation of community views
   - Community services (eg, transport;
Skills for Regeneration: Learning by Community Champions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community centres/meeting places</th>
<th>Community information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community association</td>
<td>Social welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information, advice and counselling services</td>
<td>Children’s education (pre-school/school/out of school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to facilities/services</td>
<td>Sustainable development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social enterprise</td>
<td>Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area/ neighbourhood regeneration</td>
<td>Other:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.4 Which individuals or types of people are you benefiting through your Community Champions funding?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POST CODE</th>
<th>Children - school age</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children - pre-school</td>
<td>Mental health/learning difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young people (16-25)</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 50s</td>
<td>Black/minority ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>Local residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carers</td>
<td>Patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refugees/ asylum seekers</td>
<td>Community at large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.5 How much was the Community Champions grant?

- Less than £100
- £100-£499
- £500-£999
- £1,000-£1,499
- £1,500-£1,999
- Over £2,000

Q.6 And what did the money enable you to do or what specifically did you buy with it?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POST CODE</th>
<th>Attend events/short courses</th>
<th>Pursue a longer course/qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor/advise others</td>
<td>Provide training for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organise events to</td>
<td>Organise volunteers (eg, as mentors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>involve local people</td>
<td>Develop a website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carry out a local survey</td>
<td>Purchase equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remove a barrier to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>training (eg, meet childcare costs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.7 Have you received any other funding to assist you in what you are doing?

- YES
- NO

Q.7a IF ‘YES’ From which source(s)?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

63
Q.7b  IF ‘YES’  Was this before or after you got the Community Champions funding?
Before □  After □

C.  SUPPORT BEFORE/ DURING THE PROGRAMME

Q.8  I’d like to talk now about the support you had personally during your involvement with Community Champions. What information, advice or other support was provided to you by your Community Champions contacts?

Q.9  How useful was this?
Very useful □  Useful □  Not very useful □  Not at all useful □

D  LEARNING WHILE ON THE COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS PROGRAMME

Q.10  As a result of what you have done with the help of the Community Champions grant, what is the most important thing you have learnt?

I’d like to explore in more detail how you have developed what you can do and what you know.

Q.11  What do you feel you are now more capable of doing? (eg, in turning ideas into action, involving the community, managing or organising projects, or getting resources)  PROBE FULLY – WRITE IN
POST CODE

**Skills for Regeneration: Learning by Community Champions**

**Turning ideas into action**
- Resolving community needs
- Solving problems

**Working with the community**
- Helping others help themselves
- Dealing with difficult people/situations
- Communicating

**Managing projects**
- Developing business/action plans
- Managing project finances
- Publicity

**Dealing with partners & funders**
- Influencing public agencies
- Negotiating

**Other**: ……………………………………………………………………………………………

Q.12 What do you know more about in developing community activities, eg, about local needs, sources of funding, or good ways of doing things? PROBE

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POST CODE

**Local organisations**
- Community needs
- Where/ how your activities fit in the wider context

**People to contact**
- Community needs
- Where to go for advice & information

**Possibilities for action**
- Subject matter specific to main area of community activity
- ‘What works’ in regeneration or community development

**Other**: ……………………………………………………………………………………………

Q.13 How has your experience (with your Community Champions-related activity) changed the way in which you do things, eg, in how you deal with funding organisations and officialdom in general?

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E  OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

Q.14 Overall, what do you feel you have achieved with the help of the Community Champions grant?

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Q.15 And what else do you feel you personally have gained by taking part?

PROBE

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POST CODE

Increased confidence/self-esteem  □ Money to do something useful  □ Recognition/respect
Satisfaction from helping others  □ Meeting new people/useful contacts  □ Higher aspirations/ambitions
Greater commitment/perseverance  □ Awareness of what's possible  □ Realism about what's possible
Learning from others  □ Encouragement into further learning  □ Recognition of learning
New ideas  □ Reader to take on a new job  □ A new job
Other: ...........................................................................................................................

Q.16 What skills and knowledge have you passed on to others as a result of your involvement in Community Champions (if any)?

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Q.17 Can you suggest any improvements to the Community Champions programme which would help people like you in the future?

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F  FURTHER PLANS AND LEARNING NEEDS

Q.18 What plans do you have for pursuing your involvement in community activities?
Q.19 Are you undertaking or planning any further learning or training which will help you in this?

IF ‘YES’: a) Currently undertaking learning/ training

What learning/ training? .................................................................

b) Planning to undertake further learning/ training

What learning/ training? .................................................................

IF ‘NO’: a) Further learning completed since the end of the Community Champions activity

What learning/ training? .................................................................

b) Not planning to undertake any further learning or training

Q.20 And is there any further learning, training or other support would help you?

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POST CODE

Qualification

Training - other formal courses (non-qualification)

Training - Informal

Coaching

Networking

Advice from support workers or others

Signposting (to contacts, published guides, etc)

Internet information & guidance

Visiting other projects/ communities

Other: ............................................................................................

Q.21 Finally, looking back, is there anything you wish you’d known or had been able to do when you started?

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Thank you very much for your participation.
Appendix C

CHECKLIST FOR CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS

Purpose of case studies:
- delve deeper into the experience of individuals: what they have learnt, the value of support received, etc
- provide the basis for short narratives to be included as an appendix to the report
- provide quotes for use in the main report

Target interviewees
Individuals with very little or no previous experience of community activities.

CHECKLIST

1) Stimulus and aspiration

- What experience did you have in voluntary or community activities before coming across Community Champions? \(X\) ref responses to Q1 and Q2
- How did you find out about Community Champions?
- Why did you apply for the grant? \(X\) ref Q3 and Q5

2) Results and Benefits

- What did you want to achieve as a result of the Community Champions grant? 
  - for others?
  - for yourself?
- What did you achieve? \(X\) ref Q.14
- Over and above the benefits that others have gained from your project and use of the grant, what have you gained *personally*? \(X\) ref Q.15

3) Support

- What support were you offered relating to your Community Champions grant? \(X\) ref Q.8 List the different types of support and probe on each one, eg leaflets, guidance with filling in the application, invitations to attend meetings seminars, visits from intermediaries, visits to other project leaders.
- What did you find most valuable? \(X\) ref Q.9
- What did you find least valuable? Why?
- Have you sought support (information, advice, etc) from other sources in developing your project/ activities which relate to the Community Champions grant? If so, from whom?
- What other support would you have welcomed? \(X\) ref Q.20
  - From whom?
  - Why?

4) Skills and Knowledge

- In obtaining the Community Champions grant and undertaking the activity that the grant funded… \(X\) ref Q.11
  - What have done that you have not done before?
  - What can you now do much better?
Probe relating to capabilities covered under ‘Turning ideas into action’; ‘Working with the community’; ‘Managing projects’; ‘Dealing with funders and partners’

- You said that in the earlier interview that the most important ‘thing you have learnt’ was “XXXX”. Why was this? (X ref Q.10)
  - what else did you have to find out in developing your project?
  - what else do you now know that you didn’t before? (X ref Q.12)

Probe relating to know-what, know-who, know-why

- Specifically, what have you learnt about funding and advice available (ask this if it has not already been covered)
  - about where to go for funding?
  - about how to get it?
  - about where to go for advice?

- How did the Community Champions grant help in this?

5) Future Plans

- What plans do you have for pursuing your involvement in community activities? (X ref Q.19)
  - what are you already doing, or are definitely going to do?
  - what might you do?
- In this, what do you now need to find out more about?
- What do you need to become better at doing?
- What would help you personally in this? (eg, training, a qualification, advice) Why would this help? (elaborate on Q.20)
- Where would you seek this training or advice?
- What might prevent you from carrying through these plans?
- Will the fact that you have had the Community Champions grant help you get a better job in the future?
  - If so, how?

6) Advice for others

- What advice would you offer someone else thinking of applying for Community Champions?
  - what do you think they need to pay a lot of attention to at the beginning?
  - what might they need to find out that will make a difference later to their chances of success?
Appendix D  CASE STUDIES

Case Study D.1:
Valerie Barker, 'Mixing in Stones' Oasis, Calderdale

Interview Synopsis

Previous experience

Their area had received Single Regeneration Budget money before and Valerie had joined that committee. She had only just joined and had heard about Community Champions as well so they thought they’d do something in their area.

Project funded

They formed a small group of six women called 'Mixing in Stones Oasis', before getting the grant, and landscaped a community garden for the school where a portable classroom had been pulled down. This was not funded by Community Champions, but a Tool Library developed out of the need to buy tools to do the garden.

“There’s a lot of unemployment and there isn’t a lot of money to hire tools. So we did a survey and found out what we needed. We sent off the application form to Community Champions. Read that small booklet, You Can Do, I think it was called something like that, and that seemed to give you some encouragement. So, we got a lot of help and we opened it out and Community Champions gave us a grant for £1900.”

The grant was to buy some tools and office equipment. They were subsequently given shop premises by their local housing office.

Finding out about Community Champions

At one of the meetings that she attended at Voluntary Action Calderdale.

Achievements with the Community Champions grant

For others: setting up the tool hire library for the underprivileged and unemployed.

For herself: She had time on her hands and wanted to feel useful.

Through applying to Community Champions she has also gone on training courses and spoken at meetings about what they've done. “Now, none of this could I have done before.”

“When people back you, you’ve got that bit more confidence. You know, you feel as though you're worthy.”

She feels readier to take on any new projects as a result of her experience with the tile library and is “Volunteered out at the moment. We do the shop two hours a day and then on other small committees. We’ve got a local church in our area which is
the hub of the community, everything happens there and we’re renovating the grounds.”

Support offered

Valerie dealt with Community Champions directly and received leaflets and booklets on how to complete the application form. She attended meetings and seminars and a special awards seminar in Leeds last year at which she was presented with a certificate and a cut glass goblet. “Christa Ackroyd presented it to us all. We were all Community Champions.”

At these meetings, seminar things that she went to with Community Champions they spoke to other champions.

The most valuable support received was the contact with Alison who was there on the other end of the phone if she had any problems. “She even said if we wanted help with the constitution, anything like that, just contact them and they would give it gladly, willingly.”

“You do learn by meeting up with the other groups and people who are Champions, by talking over, you get ideas off them. It amazed me about the different ideas that people came up with and got support to do.”

Other support needed

Nothing needed because they had all the support they required and whatever she wanted she went out and looked for it. For example, she has done small business courses, some of which are accredited, first aid and security, which they needed because of the Health and Safety Act. They work with children at the school so they have to be police checked.

She has done a full funding course of four days. They went and looked for these courses and “because there was a group of us, they would come to us and do them, if we could supply the premises.” It was run by Voluntary Action, Calderdale with whom she is registered. Every two months she gets one of their magazines and “it tells you all the new things and they’ve got Community Champions in that.”

Learning

Valerie feels that she is able to be more forward now. “I’ll speak up and speak my mind, whereas before I wouldn’t. I was happy to let others take the course but now I say what I want to do.”

She found out that her ideas were welcome as well and she is therefore more confident about turning your ideas into action. “It’s like capacity building, I feel as though I could tackle anything now.”

Although she has not been to the big funders, only to smaller ones, she has learnt how to fill the forms in. “You could write a ten page essay, but that isn’t what you want. They want to read what you want to do at the beginning.”

“I haven’t tackled the big one. I’m going to do the Lottery, but that will include capital and revenue.”
In the earlier interview she said that the most important thing she'd learnt was how to work in the community. This was very important because she'd lived in the area so long, she was part of the community and wanted to do something that's lasting for the next generation. “I'm not old, but the next generation maybe can add to it or do their thing. I would like to leave something lasting, that I can say, 'I was part of that'. Especially something like a garden, that's great.”

Having got the money to fund a project is the least of what has to be done. “It isn't a case that you can just say, oh good, they've given us this, we can open up. There's a heck of a lot of things that you have to do. You have to look for insurance, that is our biggest problem, not a lot of insurers want to insure.”

The administration, book-keeping and ordering is daunting - she is responsible for that, as part of a group, but she and her husband run the shop on a day-to-day basis. They have volunteers but she has to make sure that that money is correctly accounted for.

She knows now to get other people to do the work whilst she organises them. “The first project we did was the garden and we did it physically ourselves. I do know now to get in as many people to do it and I will organise it.”

She has learnt there's a lot of funding available especially for areas that are “like ours”. She has also been on the other end of funding and done appraisals as well. Some for Community Champions. She went to Leeds and read through the application forms for funding from a vast number of people who want funding and she had to say 'yes' or 'no'. If something's sustainable they would get funding.

She has also learnt a lot of places to go for advice, mainly Community Champions. “Somebody there would put me in the right place or direct me where to go, if I had a problem of funding, but you learn where your funders are, or where to look for them, because we've got Funder Finder set up on our computer.”

**Plans for further activities**

They are now branching out and are helping a school in Brighouse create their garden.

Valerie was not physically doing it, and is going to suggest that the parents who are involved apply to Community Champions. “Because they are going to be doing something they've never done before.” It is £80,000 to do the full garden. They have done phase one, which cost £30,000 and she helped find the money for that and they've got them another £7,000, for phase two. She is going to try the Lotteries for a big amount of money for the remainder of the project.

The other money came from the Children's Fund, and they've got Single Regeneration budget money from the Government. “Roy, the headmaster, asked if me and John would look for funding for him.”

She felt there was nothing she now needed to find out more about, other than accountancy which was what she needed to become better at doing. Although she had done a short course, it was not in-depth enough.
“But I’ve got back-up there if I go wrong. With these funders, especially Community Champions, they tell you if you’ve got any problems, just ring them. If Community Champions couldn’t help me actually doing it, they would put me in contact with something or somebody.”

The only thing that might prevent them from carrying through these plans (school garden) was not getting the funding. They have to raise about £50,000 for that and about £40,000 for the local big project around the church. That becomes harder, because there’s not every funder who wants to give to churches. They have completed the disabled access and path and now have to provide disabled toilets in the church building. They will raise money themselves for that, with swimathons and fetes etc.

Advice offered to others

“If they’ve thought up something they’d love to do and it would benefit other people, go ahead, go and ask for it, because Champions give you help.”

At the beginning they’d need to try and put down their ideas clearly on paper. If it isn’t feasible, they’re there to help you as well.

Their chances of success rest on a good application form with their idea put in a few lines. “Because Community Champions is not big sheets of paper that you have to fill in.”

“They need to live in the catchment area where the grant is given, because if they don’t, then you don’t look any further.”

Because they (Community Champions) do so many areas, so that’s the first thing (catchment area) and then the others would be scanning actually what they wanted to do, who would it benefit and the age group, etc.
Case Study D.2:

Amar Dehar, wheelchair basketball, Wolverhampton

**Interview Synopsis**

*Previous experience*

Amar had a little experience of voluntary teaching of basketball to other disabled players in his school team.

*Project funded*

The grant was to help them to get more disabled children into playing basketball, to buy equipment and get another team together. Some money was to provide wheelchairs as well as for those disabled players.

*Finding out About Community Champions*

The deputy head of the school provided the address for Community Champions. He wanted some players to help out with teaching others and building a team, so he wanted them to apply for funding.

*Achievements with the Community Champions grant*

**For others:** It was to show people that disabled people can do things such as playing basketball from a wheelchair. They achieved this by getting more people interested in playing basketball, even though they were disabled.

**For himself:** Amar is disabled himself and wanted to prove that they can do things, "That we are not just disabled."

He is also more confident that he can talk to people and that people are listening to what he is saying.

*Support offered*

The Deputy Head from his old school helped him to fill in the form.

Amar had phone calls and leaflets sent from Community Champions and they went to one meeting in Birmingham.

He could not remember what help or advice was most valuable as he has left that school now. It was last summer. There was nothing that he considered to be least valuable.

*Support needed*

Amar would like to know more about the community and more about what people are offering. More support should have come from the people around them, eg, the teachers and the people doing the training.
Learning

Since obtaining the grant he has learnt how to get more people interested in basketball. He also felt that he could manage a project better now as a result of his experience with the project and that he knew more about what the community of disabled basketball players and their families wanted.

The most important thing he has learnt was to get along with people and not be afraid of meeting people he didn't know before. He listened more to what people were telling him but hadn't learnt more about getting on with people better – that was about the same as before.

In terms of looking for funding he had learnt more about where to go and how to get it. “I know there is someone there. If we do need the help, I know there is someone who will help us.”

They were thinking of Community Champions or any other sources of funding they could find. “Everything really.”

Plans for further activities

Because he has left the school he was at they might have someone else to do it, but he was not going to be involved in anything similar at the college where he is now. Because he only started at college in September he had not considered doing something similar at college, such as setting up a basketball team or club for disabled people.

Need to know more about

If Amar decided to do something similar at his college he would probably turn to the people he was with at first and ask them for advice and where to go for funding. For example his teachers, the Deputy Head of his former school and the trainers.

Advice offered to others

Although he did not know what advice to offer somebody who was thinking of applying for a Community Champions grant, he felt that at the beginning, when they are filling in the form, they need to tell them the truth. “What they want it for.”

Amar felt prospective people applying for funding needed to know how much their equipment etc. was going to cost before asking for any money. “Say if they were in my situation, they would want to know how much the wheelchairs are, how much the kit would cost, how much the ball costs etc.”

He also said they should know how much they could pay the basketball players “because I get paid now, my wages. It is like a job for me now because I get paid.”

He was very appreciative that the Community Champions grant had helped him to get the job. “Every game we play we get paid.” So they are like professional players now and that came directly from the Community Champions grant having helped him get the training in the beginning.
Case Study D.3:
Keith Hancock, training for mental health volunteers, Northumberland

Interview Synopsis

Previous Experience

The organisation that Keith is now with was offering a six-month training course in Staffordshire, and practical experience of working with small groups of people with mental health problems.

"I was sold on the organisation and its culture and within a year I had persuaded the management committee that I should come to Northumberland to open another division/branch of the organisation."

Project funded

The grant was to train up to 10 volunteers. To attract volunteers, recruit them, train them, with the objective of starting two groups in north Northumberland.

Finding out About Community Champions

When Keith arrived in Northumberland and started doing market research (as a volunteer himself) to look at the mental health services in Northumberland, to see what existed and where there might be room for changes, he realised that they needed money to do it.

Someone gave him a number to enrol on a course called Community Health Champions, which was delivered at Northumberland College. By accident, they also gave him the phone number of the Scarman Trust and confused the Community Health Champions with Community Champions.

“It was pure chance. I was given wrong information but as it happens it turned out to be a goldmine.”

Achievements with Community Champions grant

For others: To train volunteers to help people with mental health problems. Specifically, to facilitate the group moving in the right direction using a 12 step program which the establishment calls a 'recovery model'. "It is a healing process and a growth process. We set a group up and have two trained volunteers to facilitate the group so that it is going in the right direction. To make sure everyone gets to say what they want to say, make sure there is no disruption (which there never is anyway)."

For himself: The training and experience was part of his own training and growth. He was learning and growing at the same time as passing information on to others and was delivering a training program that was well established, well proven and open college network accredited. That helped him to research what the potential was though the volunteers in the area by being with a group in their own community,
who knew much better than he did the community, where they might set up a group, how to attract them. That was research learning and growing. “And we did set up two groups which are both running extremely well.”

The satisfaction from his own achievements was enormous. “You can’t put a price on it in terms of reward. I have gone from a profession of not caring to a profession of caring, which is just wonderful. A lot of the volunteers are at a certain age of life where they have had enough of whatever they were doing and want to make a fresh start and want to put something back into the community and also want to learn and grow. So in that respect it is electrifying in having such eagerness to break comfort zones and reach new boundaries.”

**Support offered**

The Scarman Trust were very supportive and he was visited by the Regional Director who very quickly helped him learn about fund raising and the business planning process. “There was a strategic input from David about who best to talk to for a funding strategy and they actually applied their “Can Do” analysis to the business quite early on to see how well placed we were as an organisation and how to move forward. David and Dennis Oliver presented us with a questionnaire and we had the whole of the Executive Committee together to work on the questionnaire to see how well placed we were and we worked through it on a flip chart and it was a really important time for us. So working through that gave us a lot of points to focus on for moving forward, and David does some temperature checks on the organisation and still keeps tabs on it.”

Keith did not receive any help from Community Champions as such, other than the funding.

The most valuable help he received from the Scarman Trust was “a lot of support and understanding. Understanding of what they must come across all of the time, which is individuals with a dream, that has to be turned into reality in a practical way. It is all very well having a dream but you can suddenly run out of steam without support.”

In the very early days the Scarman Trust had a day’s workshop which might have been a Community Champions workshop. It included four workshops in one day which everyone could visit. All the award winners could visit. One of them was on evaluation, one of them fundraising and they were all valuable for small organisations.

**Support needed**

There was no particular support needed as he was very well furnished with support from the Scarman Trust. But he also sought support and advice from Ark 19 whom the Scarman Trust connected him with – who helped on several occasions to put evaluation processes in place. “They were useful – a really good service.”

All his requirements were met in terms of support and advice. He had an intensely high profile business background so things like business planning were second nature. “It was good to carry it forward with me.”
Learning

Because Keith had started from scratch everything they touched upon in the early days was a springboard from fundraising to analysing the organisation to community work to evaluation. “And also, networking, because David was very helpful in pointing out organisations which might further help us with funding and his own vast knowledge and experience pushed me quickly up the learning curve.”

Specifically, he has learnt who to go to about funding and advice. “I found the Directory of Funders was invaluable and how to approach funders and where to put the emphasise.”

Plans for further activities

Keith’s future plans for pursuing his involvement in community activities include submitting two further funding applications. One to the Community Fund and the other to the Northern Rock Foundation (a building society), they have a separate charitable funding organisation, who gave them 12 months ago, £48,000 to run a pilot to extend that which they had already established. Specifically to employ two full time workers, so that by the end of 2005 they will have 10 groups in Northumberland – five in the North and five in the South. “That would enable us to offer (we are already offering) a good accessible mental health service in Northumberland which is now well supported by Northumberland Care Trust, which is no mean feat. When we have 10 groups up and running we will be able to offer on an annual basis, probably, 4000 places in group meeting over the period of one year.”

Need to know more about

Their major challenge as an organisation is recruiting volunteers and it is perceived as “a perennial and universal problem with any voluntary organisation. It is not unique, it is not that we don’t know what to do, it is just, particularly in Northumberland, which is a strange culture anyway, is attracting people to come and help us.”

They get training offered by the Volunteer Association and the Volunteer Bureau who offer excellent training free of charge. “And they cover everything. Our Committee have been to Executive Committee training delivered by Volunteer Bureau and CVS offer how to attract and keep volunteers. So some way or other we have excellent training facilities. We are blessed with support. Absolutely tons of support and the networking in Northumberland is second to none. I have not seen anything like it. Maybe it is because it is so remote and isolated that communities get together and support each other.”

Lack of funding is the only thing that might prevent you from carrying through these plans. “The only resource that we are short of is funding. The volunteer thing can be overcome. All I have to do is advertise more frequently and train more frequently and be prepared to accept a high turnover. But that is not unusual, it is just par for the course. In being able to say that we have been supported by Community Champions is good pedigree.”
Advice offered to others

Keith suggested that the person meet and sit down with supporters and have a one to one conversation about the project. They should pass on essential information on every aspect of the project in such way that it would be guaranteed to work, as David from Scarman Trust did with him.

Getting the facts straight of what they want to do with the money is most important. At the beginning that they need to pay attention to filling out the application form and getting to grips with the project.

Keith thought it was “important it to try and put oneself in the shoes of the funder and understand that there needs to be some sort of measurable outcome. So often a good idea is just a good idea. If someone is going to carry on getting funding to support a project, we always have to keep our eyes on what are the outcomes and are they results that people will understand and relate to and feel disposed towards."

Understanding what the funding requirements are, the funding criteria, is really important and will make a difference later on to their success in getting the funding.
Case Study D.4:

Denise Holyhead, complementary health centre, Rotherham

Interview Synopsis

Previous experience

Denise had no previous experience.

Project funded

Community Champions funded her learning and training in developing the project through the Regen School\(^\text{16}\) in Sheffield. She previously undertook training at Northern College in alternative therapies.

The project is community-based, to promote people’s well-being and health in the community. It is non-profit making. It is a complementary health centre which will be based in Malt Bay, an ex-mining area. A lot of people benefit from complementary therapies like aromatherapy, healing, reflexology, homeopathic medication, yoga, etc. The project is to bring all the therapies together under one roof where they can receive or provide the therapies in a safe environment. At the moment everyone is doing it from their own homes.

Finding out about Community Champions

Wendy, her partner told her about Community Champions. She surfs the net at the library and came across the Community Champions and approached her to do this course to help them with the project. “We have a mentor, we meet up with her and she helps us with the project.”

Achievements with the Community Champions grant

For herself: Denise now has more confidence, more experience. “Before I thought I was thick. Now I know I’m not that bad.”

For others: To access complimentary therapies is expensive and not everybody has the money to have these therapies. She felt this discriminates against those people. So they were looking at people being able to access this who aren’t financially as well off as other people. “They should be able to reap the benefits as well.”

Although the centre is not open yet, they have identified a building, and have a solicitor and an architect. They have formed a committee, so there are meetings continuously ongoing, making sure everything is right so that is succeeds. This is why they wanted the training course, because they did not want to go in blind. They needed to know and have the experience and support that they were doing everything right.

\(^{16}\) Regen School promotes and delivers community-based learning through the sharing of experience. Community Mentors work with people to set up, run and manage regeneration projects. It was established by a group of regeneration practitioners in Sheffield/ South Yorkshire from organisations like Manor & Castle Development Trust. A case study of Regen School can be found in M Taylor and others ‘Exploring the Field of Residents’ Consultancy’ DfES Research Report RR382
Support offered

Ruth, their mentor from the Regen School, helps with anything and guides them whilst they are doing things. “She puts us in touch with other people in other organisations.”

Wendy and she sat down together and filled in the application form. They had a chat with somebody from Community Champions but could not remember the name of the person. Because she works full time the respondent is not been able to attend all the invitations they have had to Community Champions meetings and seminars.

People from Community Champions did visit and telephone them. The help she found most valuable was their friendly attitude which made them feel they could ask anything and not feel stupid. “They took us to Sheffield to the Manor Project and they gave us a tour around everything and showed us the way they have helped up there. That demonstrated how you can improve an area like that. They are very open-minded and supportive. Whatever you personally feel, they are encouraging and supporting.”

There was nothing they found least valuable or thought was not necessary because she thinks life is a learning process and even in a conversation you can pick up things and gain some information or knowledge somewhere else and it comes in useful. “You think, I never thought I’d have used that. And it does come up somewhere.”

Support needed

They are still trawling the net for other sources of funding but would welcome more help on the legal issues such as liabilities and police checking, etc. “It’s the clarity of the information that the path your are taking, you are safe on.”

They have a solicitor who is very helpful, “and a gentleman called Walter from E-Zone, he’s been very helpful”.

Learning

Denise now feels more confident in that she has more knowledge and is more sure of herself to achieve the things she is aiming for. That also applies to sharing that knowledge with other people.

Because their project is improving people’s lives and rather than seeing a physical thing, you see people’s lives improve by them becoming much happier. “We are working in our own homes and going out on home visits and the feedback we get from those people we are seeing is that ‘Oh, I feel much better now’. It’s rewarding in itself and that’s our reward that things are working.”

She knows there is more information available now. “It was like looking for a needle in a haystack when you first start and you don’t know what’s out there and once you start it is like opening a door. The more information you get just opens the door wider. Also, as we are going on, we are speaking to different people, it’s having a knock on effect, they are saying ‘Oh well, I know so and so, have you spoken to them?’ It is leading from one thing to another.”
They have got a pile of funding applications for different places to get further funding. They have found there is funding for things they didn’t even know about. “We found that we can provide, to a certain degree, free healing and get the funding to pay for the therapies. This will come in handy for people who cannot afford it – we can have sessions for the more deprived people.”

**Plans for further activities**

Once they have got the premises they are looking at doing a fun day with publicity and advertisements. If it is successful they may expand it to another centre elsewhere. “We don’t really know how, if it snowballs, whether we will need another centre. Hopefully it will develop that once we have got the first one up and running that we can re-create that to benefit another area. Bring people in to see what it is like and what we are doing, because there is an awful lot of ignorance and fear around the complimentary therapies sometimes.”

**Need to know more about**

At the moment, they need to make sure that they have got it right in the one place first. Because they have not got the premises yet and are not open, they do not want to look too far ahead. “It could spin off in all sorts of directions, and we are looking at tendering for going into businesses with the therapies, to provide healing to people in the work place. Lunchtime sessions.”

They thought it would be information and advice they would need primarily, when expanding as training was something she got in her workplace anyway. “What I do at work helps me with the project and sometimes what I am doing with the project helps me with what I am doing at work, so it benefits both sides.

Denise felt that the Regen School would be the best source of further learning but that lack of time might prevent her from carrying through her expansion plans. The main objective would be to increase or improve the project and the centre itself because, “The more we can do for the community, the better.”

**Advice offered to others**

The advice she would offer others thinking of applying for a Community Champions grant would be to “Go for it”.

Her advice to people applying who are in their infancy is to listen and take the advice of the people that they are speaking to, because they have got the experience and knowledge that they are looking for.

How successful they were would depend on the project as to how worthwhile it is and if it is something that is valuable.
Case Study D.5:
Margaret Ringer, community flats, Slough

Interview Synopsis

Previous experience

Margaret had no experience whatsoever before starting on her project.

Project funded

The grant funded her training and office skills so that she could start the community flats. She had been given a flat by Beacon Housing who manage the properties in Burnham. She is a board member for Beacon and they had done some regeneration work on what could be described as their worst estate. "I said there was no point doing it unless they put a support system in, how about a flat? That's how we came to have the community flat. I took things from there and have built in things to tone down the problems in the area."

Margaret was supporting the people (residents) on the estate. Originally it was just the whole estate they supported but now they cover the whole of Burnham. Projects include a baby clinic every fortnight. They do computer courses and health related courses on depression, etc. Alternative therapies are offered. They have also started to do a lot of handicraft sessions to get people to come in and not sit at home on their own. They have two children's clubs a breakfast club for their local school. They go to the school three times a week and give a breakfast for children with special needs, then they do a 20 minute program on the children's maths.

The grant was for all sorts of different things, but office training was the main one. They used it for some equipment. The computers and printers were purchased mainly from Beacon Housing but the Community Champions grant helped with the volunteers' expenses. Publicity up to now has cost them nothing because people always want to know what is going on and they ask the respondent and any of her volunteer helpers.

Finding out about Community Champions

Somebody nominated her originally. Somebody whom Margaret had only met once thought it would be suitable for her. She could not remember the person’s name.

Achievements with the Community Champions grant

For others: Originally Margaret's achievement was simply to be able to give people a sense of community and it has grown from there. “This is our community and lets all look after it together."

For herself: Because she lived here she got “fed up with the moaning and looking at things and being a moaner myself. It never occurred to me that it would get this big."

Before she started she was agoraphobic. “I still suffer from it, but to a very small degree. I don’t have too big a problem with confidence now. Learning skills, I use the
computers, I wouldn’t even have looked at one before. “I hadn’t had any office training or anything.”

She now does the book work, keeps the minutes and everything else. These are things she had never thought about before.

They are just beginning to advertise now because they need to reach a lot more people by actually putting in a bid for another £2000 from Community Champions. When she was at a presentation two weeks ago, they told her unofficially that she had got it. “The fact that we have got it twice, will really help with the publicity itself, rather than just pay for things like the printer which we need because we do our own leaflets.”

So they can now pay for the publishing and putting the adverts into newspapers.

Support offered

The intermediary body between Community Champions and herself was Nicholas who was “something to do with Burnham Youth Club. He was the manager or on the managing board of the Youth Club.”

She did not get leaflets or guidance or invitations to meetings or seminars from Community Champions. She just received the money.

Margaret didn’t fill in the application form because Nicholas did it all on her behalf.

At this time she had some support from the BCA (Bucks Community Action), because she had phoned them up and said “Can I have another go?” They said ‘Of course you can, it’s not a problem’. “So I have had lots of support from Laurie Johnson. I think he runs that side of the BCA.” Laurie and his team were very supportive. She tends to phone them rather than Laurie phoning her.

Support needed

Margaret gets lots of support from different areas. “I am lucky to be able to phone up people and say, can you help me with this one, and it doesn’t necessarily have to be anything for Community Champions. It covers everything.”

Learning

The most important advantage to come out of the project was that Margaret feels able to go and get a job in an office and be able to cope with computers. “I could certainly do presentations. I can do anything.”

It has been a tremendous practical advantage to her personally in developing her skills as well as enabling her to conduct her project.

Margaret would never have thought herself capable of managing the breakfast club project and would not have dreamed of doing that before. “I would have been too scared, to be honest.”

She said in the earlier interview that the most important thing she had learnt was confidence because she had had to learn about everything from scratch.
“Because I didn’t know things like Health & Safety, Child Protection, literally, I had to start from the basics.” She also had to learn about insurance as a result of dealing with such a wide range of people.

She considered herself very lucky because she was able to network with other people. At the same time that she started with the project, the flats, Burnham was a target area for social deprivation. As a result she attended a meeting of a safety forum and met a lot of useful people there. They had seen that things were settling down on the estate, “and they just heaped me with lots of support and I came back not only being voted in as the Chairman of this thing, but with loads of support and people who knew from where I could get information and who could actually do hands on as well.”

In terms of funding and where to go for advice she had learnt that it sounds easy on paper to get, but it’s very difficult to ‘pin people down’. “Community Champions is one of the easiest ways, I have to admit, because it is just a couple of forms. Before I had a form from Laurie Johnson the other day, because he had re-vamped it, and this made things even easier, and to me it was ‘yes you have got it’ or ‘no you haven’t’. The guidelines are quite good, they are not that specific.”

She had been on a course in Brighton but found it too complicated to follow. The Government have got £5 million to spend with housing associations and she thought this was going to be an opportunity to raise some more funds. “We stayed there 15 minutes and realised that there was no way we could tap into any of it. It is too difficult, so it’s just refreshing that Community Champions is so easy and you know where you are with it.”

**Plans for further activities**

Margaret has been asked to advise on other areas outside of Burnham, and with different housing associations, that have similar problems. She is also just expanding what they are currently doing.

**Need to know more about**

Her next big step is to get into lottery funding. Her funding runs out in May 2003, “unless somebody comes forward.” So they are working on a business plan “which is gobbledygook to me at the moment.” That is the first thing she has to get to grips with, but they are also training a lot of volunteers in different skills so that when she is not there, they will be able to run it. “They have all been police checked and that sort of thing, so that we are not risking anything.”

Advice is always welcome but nothing specific came to mind that she would need.

With regard to further training she is going on a lot of weekend courses, some run by Beacon Housing. She is also going on a publicity and newsletter training course and one on regeneration in March. She hasn’t had the program for April, May and June yet, but is averaging out at least one weekend training course a month. These courses are all done through PEP17.

17 Priority Estates Programme who run ODPM-funded training aimed at local authority and social housing tenants.
The only thing that might prevent her from carrying out their expansion plans is if funding doesn’t come through.

Advice offered to others

The advice to others would be to think about what they really want it for and “if you feel as though you want it to be flexible, then that is what you do, make it flexible.”

By ‘flexible’ she meant the opportunity to put in figures that need not be too specific, for example, with the training. She considered the Community Champions forms to be easy to complete.

Margaret suggested that prospective applicants go onto the Community Champions website and see what other communities have got funding for. “When I made the last application, I did go on the website and had a look. I mean I had already had the luxury of being at the awards ceremony with a lot of the people anyway, so we had networked very well together and got their backgrounds and what they had done with their money, but then I revisited it and thought, right we can go down this route.”

It gave her lots of ideas for opportunities and to see what others have done.
Case Study D.6:

Peter Watts, ‘Smooth Guides’, Dorchester

Interview Synopsis

Previous experience

No experience at all.

Project funded

Community Champions funded Peter to research ‘Smooth Guides’ on disabled access at tourist attractions. He wanted to do a guide book for wheelchair users and had tried to get sponsors, which was becoming very, very difficult until he found Community Champions.

Finding out about Community Champions

Peter thinks he saw it in the paper. It said that Community Champions did community grants and so he sent off for an application form and managed to get it.

Achievements with Community Champions grant

For others: He produced a booklet for wheelchair users and all copies went very quickly because it was free. They were distributed to people and places that he knew and also to the Tourist Information Centres where they were gladly received. “They thought they were very good and I have had many calls to say, have you got any more the following year because everybody said they went down very well.” As a result he has been commissioned by a national company of publishers to produce one for the whole country, by regions. He has completed the West Country to date, which should be published in June this year.

Peter has a place on a residential college course for disabled people in Mansfield on web-design which would work well with the book as then both he and the publishers will have a linked web-site. “That will be very good because at the weekends I’ll be going round that area to fill the gap in the Midlands and South Yorks.”

For himself: He has had MS for over 20 years. His achievement is having produced the booklet for other disabled people which has had a really good feedback from people. It’s also good for him “Just for the pure sake of doing something useful, because it is not much good just staring at walls and watching daytime television.”

Support offered

Peter applied to Scope which was the body overseeing it. Scope was also the vehicle that the lottery people use to distribute the money. “I didn’t realise this, in fact the MS society were doing it (grants) as well. I would have done it through them if I had known about it.” He did not receive support from Scope. “They just let me get on with it.” He had no help filling in the application forms, but didn’t really need any. “The forms were OK although they were looking to catch you out. There were quite a lot of double negatives in the questions. So I was little bit wary or concerned. I thought it
would be quite straightforward. It wasn’t really that straightforward. But I got through it, that wasn’t a problem.”

He had no further help from the Community Champions but was invited to Scope meetings where he spoke about his project. “To be quite honest, there wasn’t really support. I wasn’t looking for any support, because I knew what I wanted to do, which was fairly straightforward. It wasn’t a particularly involved project, it was just going around visiting these places and reporting on how accessible they were for people with wheelchairs. I did 30, from Cornwall to Stonehenge.”

*Support needed*

Peter did not require support at the time of getting the grant but would have welcomed it afterwards. “I would have liked to have thought I could have used that experience to build on something else. Find some sort of work from it. Well I have, in the end but it has all been my own thoughts, design if you like. It would have been quite nice if I had had a little bit more interest or help and people to say, well, you have done this, what are you going to do next? I have met a few others via Scope and the Community Champions, I have been to a couple of meetings, and the other people there said basically the same sort of thing.”

Although he has been able to produce nice little brochures and magazines there was no ‘follow-up’ to take it on further. “There is nothing really hard and fast.”

It would have cost quite a lot of money to produce these booklets with full time staff. He believed that if they got people in “who knew what they were doing, a type of business link thing”, it could have resulted in some proper work, either self-employed or voluntary for people “Just give them something to get up in the mornings for.”

*Learning*

Peter has learnt how to produce written work that will sell. He has got publishers who have commissioned him do more booklets because they liked the way he worked and his writing. “It was a stepping stone to get to what I am doing now. So it has given me a lot of confidence.”

As a result of what he has achieved so far, his experience has helped with managing another project.

In terms of his project, the most important thing he has learnt, was how many attractions need more disabled access.

It has also enabled him to live a fuller life because he no longer takes notice of other people looking at him struggling up the stairs. “It has produced a thicker skin, lets say.”

With regard to funding and advice available, he has learnt where to go for funding and how to get it, but it was largely down to luck. “You just read what you think are the right magazines or you go to people who do funding and you try to find out as much as you can about it. What I have learnt is that there is not an awful lot of money about. If it is, it has got to be for fairly specific projects and if yours isn’t one of those, then you are really on a hiding to nothing if you start to try to get some extra funding to do something.”
The Community Champions grant help, which was nearly £3000, did not help him to find other funding sources. “Obviously you can’t get another grant. After you have had one you can’t have another.”

He felt it would be nice if somebody were there to explain exactly how the funding was achieved and how it ought to be achieved for another go.

**Plans for further activities**

The publishers are keen for Peter to do a national booklet where he just supplies the information. He will do it area by area and in 2004 there will be another book out. It depends on how much he has managed to write and how many areas he has managed to cover. For most of this year he is going to be taking in a lot of places, and it’s going to be quite extensive.

He has already had an advance, which isn’t huge, but if he gets stuck for funds then the funders will actually chip in a bit more money. If the book goes well, the one for the West of England, which is going to be out later, then obviously they (the existing grant funders) will be more amenable to produce some cash to help.

The IT course that he is doing will help, not for the book so much but for the other operation that he will be doing, the website. At the same time the book will start to progress.

Without the Community Champions grant he feels he would not have got that far and if he could actually follow on and it can improve he could go further with it. He has the opportunities of a career in book publishing as a result of what he has done.

**Advice offered to others**

Peter feels that you can just do a standalone project, but you also have got to have something where there is scope to go on further. You need to push the people who are overseeing it so that when the project is ended you have got something else to do or you have got some help so that you know what you are going to be doing at the end of it. There ought to be a bit more follow-up at the end of the project.

At the beginning people need help and encouragement to get it going. Someone to talk to about their idea.

Because most people come up with ideas but don’t think them through they have got to be aware that you have to be very focused on what you want to do. “Be convinced that it will work and that your own confidence in it will take the thing through”.
Appendix E  Links to Wider Government Policies and Small Grants Schemes

The Community Champions programme is now part of a wider Government agenda, given the importance now placed on involving local people in regeneration and neighbourhood improvement activities.

E.1 Neighbourhood Renewal

The Community Champions fund addresses needs articulated in the Government’s Policy Action Team (PAT) reports in 1999 on ‘Skills for Neighbourhood Renewal’ (PAT 2) and ‘Community Self-Help’ (PAT 9) for local people to get involved in driving change forward if there are to be real improvements in deprived communities.

“If capacity is to be effectively built at local level - and in particular if more local people and local organisations are to be involved in the management and delivery of learning - more needs to be done to encourage residents of disadvantaged areas to get involved in their community. Although it is by no means a complete answer, we think an important step is to give more encouragement to people who have the potential to start or lead locally generated initiatives. (PAT 2, p17)

The launch of ‘A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal - National Strategy Action Plan’ in January 2001 reinforced the Government’s commitment to narrow the gap between deprived areas and the rest by targeting funding at the 88 most deprived areas in England through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF). The National Strategy reflects the consensus across Government that investment in skills and learning and in community development in deprived areas are prerequisites for effective policy implementation.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) has set out its strategy for developing learning and skills for neighbourhood renewal in ‘The Learning Curve’\textsuperscript{18}. Its vision is that “everyone involved in neighbourhood renewal should be equipped with the skills and knowledge they need”, addressing the needs of residents as well as practitioners, professionals and policymakers, with a particular emphasis on encouraging people who may in the past have felt excluded from, or hesitant about taking part in local regeneration. The Learning Curve has an implementation plan to support the strategy, which includes several actions which relate to Community Champions:

- Community Learning Chests (which provide funding to enable community groups or individuals sponsored by groups to undertake learning opportunities to support the delivery of neighbourhood renewal activities)
- a national learning programme for neighbourhood renewal (potentially including bursaries targeted at residents) and local innovative projects
- development of leadership programmes for people working in neighbourhoods
- development of pathways for residents into neighbourhood renewal professions

The NRU has decided to bring together Community Learning Chests with the Community Empowerment Fund (which supports voluntary and community sector

engagement in Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and the Community Chests programme (which provides small grants through intermediary bodies to enable small scale community-based projects).

These NRU programmes are aimed at groups rather than individuals, distinguishing their focus from that of Community Champions. Community Champions is available across England, not just in NRF areas. Outside such urban areas, there is typically more limited access to this type of funding.

**E.2 Active Communities and Community Cohesion**

The Community Champions programme is co-funded by the Home Office, as it relates to the citizenship agenda promoted across Government by the Active Communities Unit (ACU). The ACU has a particular interest in take-up of Community Champions by young people (under 25) and older people (over 50) - for whom they set targets for take-up. Community Champions has absorbed an earlier programme, Community Development Learning Fund following a review of management of the two programmes.19

The ACU led an inter-departmental review of funding for community groups20 which advocated a more integrated and accessible approach to the funding of community groups. This put forward proposals for an integrated source of information on Government funding (now implemented: see www.volcomgrants.gov.uk), the recognition of outreach and development support for small grants programmes, simplified application processes and options for rationalisation of Government funding initiatives.

ACU now lead a wider Review of Community Capacity Building in the context of the recent Treasury Cross-Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary Sector in the Delivery of Public Services. They define ‘community capacity’ as “the ability of local people, community groups and voluntary organisations to take leading and effective roles in the development and regeneration of their communities and neighbourhoods”21 and use Community Champions as an example of a means to build such capacity.

The Community Champions fund now also features as a tool in the Government’s approach to promoting Community Cohesion agenda22, where the programme is intended to help build the capacity of communities to challenge statutory and voluntary services and provide bottom-up approaches to community cohesion, especially involving younger Champions. (£45,000 over three years is being provided to each of 15 Community Pathfinder areas.)

**E.3 Lottery and Other Funding**

There is a variety of small grants programmes, funded by Lottery Funds or Other Government Departments which have related objectives:

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20 Active Communities Unit (2001) Funding Community Groups (consultation report)
Lottery Funds

- **Awards for All:** a grants programme set up to help small groups with projects which involve people in their community; bringing them together to enjoy arts, sports, heritage and other community activities. (It is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Arts Council of England, Sport England, the New Opportunities Fund and the Community Fund.)

- **Millennium Awards** funds 50 national, regional and local Lottery award schemes, typically involving small grants of around £2,000, to enable individual people to fulfil a personal goal and, in doing so, benefit their communities.

- **You and Your Community** is one of these award schemes, administered by the Scarman Trust. Between £1,000 and £2,500 is available to anyone over 12 years old living in the UK who wants to do something to benefit their community. Awards might fund a specific project, service or facility to meet a local need. Eligible costs might include relevant training or fact finding visits which will enhance the delivery of the community project and other costs such as travel, room hire, stationery, volunteer expenses, childcare, hire of equipment or the costs of materials. Each Award will include an element of support to help with both the planning and delivery of the project. People wanting to work with others on a joint project can apply in a group of up to 10 for a maximum of £10,000.

- A **legacy fund** of £100m from the Millennium Commission is administered by UnLtd (The Foundation for Social Entrepreneurs). Their **Millennium Awards** scheme provides practical and financial support to people who have both the ideas and commitment to develop projects which will benefit their community. There are two levels of award: Level One, between £500 and £5,000; and Level Two, between £5,000 and £15,000. Applications must concern a learning opportunity for the applicant(s) and be either a new initiative or clear expansion of an existing project.

Countryside Agency

- Grants of £3,000 and £25,000 are available under the **Local Heritage Initiative**, to help communities bring their local heritage (landscape, landmarks, traditions and culture) alive.

Department for Work and Pensions

- There is provision for **Global Grants** under the European Social Fund which provides funding for small local projects which help move excluded individuals and groups into the labour market. It is administered differently in each region, through regional or local intermediaries. The ESF guidance stipulates a maximum grants of £10,000.

More locally, EU and Single Regeneration Budget funds have contributed to budgets of Community Foundations or Key Funds, which operate schemes similar to Community Champions of Community Chests. A number of these initiatives pre-date the NRU, ACU and DfES programmes.

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23 UnLtd are developing UnLtd Ventures which will provide support and structures for successful social entrepreneurs who have progressed either through their level 1 and 2 awards or independently of UnLtd. They will help social entrepreneurs grow their local initiative into a robust and sustainable project, through scaling or replicating geographically or reaching out to different groups in the community. Services will include help to develop business plans, advice on accounting, IT, legal and finances as well as access to experts and mentors.