

# Building social capital: Summary of learning from Big Local

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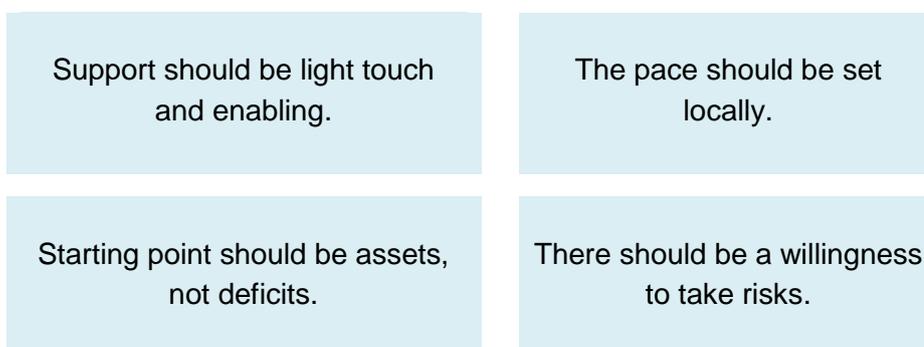
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# 1. Introduction

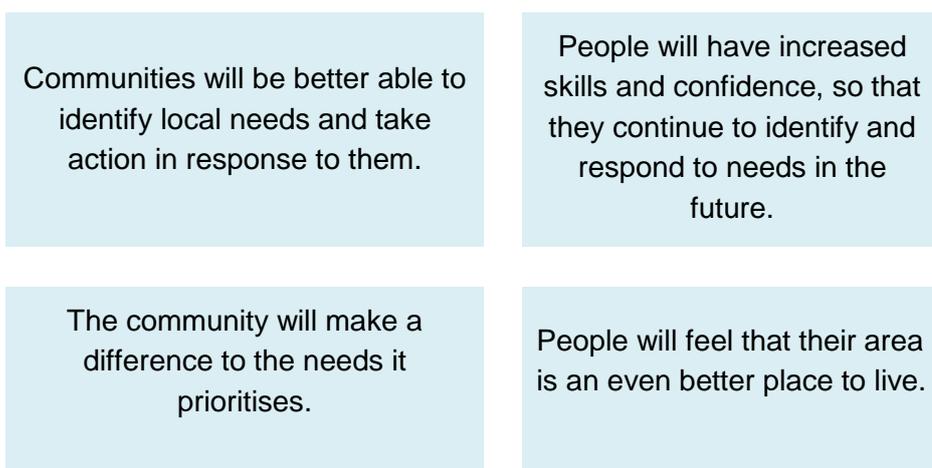
The aim of Big Local is to ensure that people are connected, have choices and are supported to achieve lasting change in the place where they live. Underpinning our resident-led and community-paced approach is our commitment to support residents over the long term to learn skills and gain the confidence to make decisions in their communities, bringing about transformational change and enabling change through ownership. In this respect, Big Local contributes to building social capital and this report summarises our learning to date.

The rationale behind Big Local is to encourage community building and social cohesion around tangible goals and activities. Residents choose how to invest £1m over ten years and are directly in charge of the implementation of their plans, with light touch, yet consistent support from Local Trust and its partners.

Big Local's approach is based on four core values:



The programme's outcomes place emphasis on capacity and confidence building.



This approach to community development raises a number of challenges in terms of evaluation, as our objectives focus on intangible qualities that are difficult to quantify or demand a big commitment from respondents to help us measure impact. These include increases in social cohesion, trust and networking; greater community capacity; and growing individual confidence. Underpinning our evaluation approach is an understanding that evaluation should be based

around strategic learning across the programme, allowing Big Local to be dynamic and flexible. In a self-reflective approach to evaluation, new learning helps us highlight gaps and areas that need improvement and immediately feeds back into the programme.

The next section defines social capital and identifies four main indicators that can help us measure it in Big Local:

- **Higher levels of local engagement**
- **Greater networking among groups and associations**
- **Increased local capacity**
- **Increased confidence and gain of new skills**

Based on these indicators, sections three to six review research on Big Local to date and examine main findings. The last section briefly assesses the early stages of plan implementation and highlights key lessons.

To date findings are limited, as one of the key innovative features of Big Local is its long-term approach, whereby the pace is set locally. However, our research partners IVAR (Institute for Voluntary Action Research), CDF (Community Development Fund), NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) and OPM (Office for Public Management) have already produced several publications, including the *Early-years evaluation* report, which can offer some valuable insights.

## 2. Definitions of social capital

Social capital is generally understood as a measure of neighbourhood trust, safety and civic engagement. *Understanding Society* describes ‘a society with high social capital as one rich in connections, co-operation and trust, where people help each other, provide information and access to opportunities and spend time for the ‘common good’.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and Fair Share Trust both define social capital as a resource which helps people achieve individual and collective goals; the linkages between people that enable them to act together and pursue shared objectives.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1 Types of social capital: bonding, bridging and linking

Social capital is often distinguished into **bonding networks** (between homogeneous groups, including family and friends) and **bridging networks** (between heterogeneous groups, for instance volunteer organisations and community groups) (Granovetter 1973; Putnam 1993; 1996).

Although bonding ties can provide communities and individuals with a sense of identity and belonging, they can also lead to the pursuit of narrow self-interests. A high level of bonding social capital can undermine crosscutting networking, which by contrast has the potential to benefit the community at large and transcend ethnic, religious, social or other divides (Jochum 2003).

Bridging networks can increase people's exposure to diversity and facilitate social interaction and exchanges, through networking and working in partnerships with external organisations. They can help people to gain access to resources that might not have been available to them otherwise.<sup>2</sup> However, communities with strong social capital can exercise tight control over members, potentially increasing the level of conformity and reducing their degree of autonomy (Jochum 2003).

The work of Robert Putnam (1993; 1996) has informed the most common understanding of social capital, mainly based around bridging networks, in which the number of voluntary organisations and their level of activity are strong predictors of high social capital. Putnam's study was based on indicators such as low voting turnouts, participation in referenda, circulation of newspapers and number of sport and cultural associations, but he overlooked the role of politics and institutions, as well as family and education. His work implies that the degree of local development or the level of pre-existing social capital will determine the success or failure of community programmes in building new social capital. For Putnam, the cycle of disadvantage is hard to break.

An understanding of social capital in terms of its dynamic evolution can be more helpful. For James S. Coleman (1988), social capital depends on action. Rather than pre-dating action, it emerges from it, as relations between people change in order to facilitate a specific goal, even where civil society is particularly weak and fragmented.

In fact, social capital does not exist in a vacuum and needs to be placed in the wider institutional context in which networks are embedded. The development of both bonding and bridging social capital undoubtedly requires support: for example, by providing a facility where people can meet and interact or access to transport services so people can attend meetings and events. Successful and constructive networking (associated with bridging social capital) also requires knowing how potential partners can be identified and contacted. Obtaining or disseminating information is therefore crucial (Jochum 2003). In this respect, Big Local can facilitate the formation of social capital, whereby the money and the support structure it offers will be equally important in facilitating networking and increasing confidence and capacity.

Woolcock (2001) introduced a useful concept, a third type of social capital which has a vertical dimension: **linking social capital**. This refers to the connections and social relations with those in authority and relates specifically to 'the capacity to leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions beyond the community', such as local and national government. For instance, some grassroots and voluntary organisations can act as advocates and can provide institutions with an effective channel for communicating and interacting with communities and marginalised groups, while helping people engage in decision-making processes and garner resources (Jochum 2003). Linking social capital therefore strengthens collective action for social change and institutional reform.

## 2.2 Norms and networks

Overall there is a general consensus around a definition of social capital based on two main dimensions: the **norms** and **networks** that facilitate collective action.

*Networks* relate to the structural aspects of social capital, i.e. social relations and interactions among individuals or within groups (such as families, organisations and communities). *Norms* focus primarily on the cultural aspects of social capital, relating to established standards of

conduct and the shared understandings or values held by a group of people (including trust and reciprocity). These two mutually interdependent elements are embedded in social structures: while networks enable the development of shared norms, shared norms encourage social interaction and strengthen networks (Jochum 2003).

These two key components are also encapsulated in the OECD's (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) definition of social capital that has been adopted by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and is used throughout government departments in the UK. Social capital is defined as the 'networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups'.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.3 Social capital within Big Local

Big Local provides a platform for local talent to flourish and ultimately gain the confidence to make decisions and improve life in their community. Measuring impact in terms of increased social capital is undoubtedly challenging. The literature has identified several indicators that, when combined, can help us assess different degrees of bonding, bridging and linking networks (Siegler 2014).<sup>4</sup>

Here we focus on four main indicators of bonding and bridging social capital that most clearly link to Big Local's outcomes and the measures we use in our evaluation plan:

- **higher levels of local engagement;**
- **greater networking among groups and associations;**
- **increased local capacity;**
- **increased confidence and gaining new skills.**

Based on these indicators, in the next few sections we examine initial findings, recognising that Big Local is about a third of the way through its timeline. Big Local takes a long term, community-paced approach to building social capital and it is crucial to take this into account when reflecting on learning to date.

Social capital of the 'linking' type plays a crucial role within the Big Local programme, as areas learn how to interact with local authorities and gain the confidence to meet and develop relationships with decision makers, in order to shape policy making. Local councils and councillors, particularly in the initial stages, often provide important guidance with their working knowledge of areas and structured approach (NCVO et al. 2014).

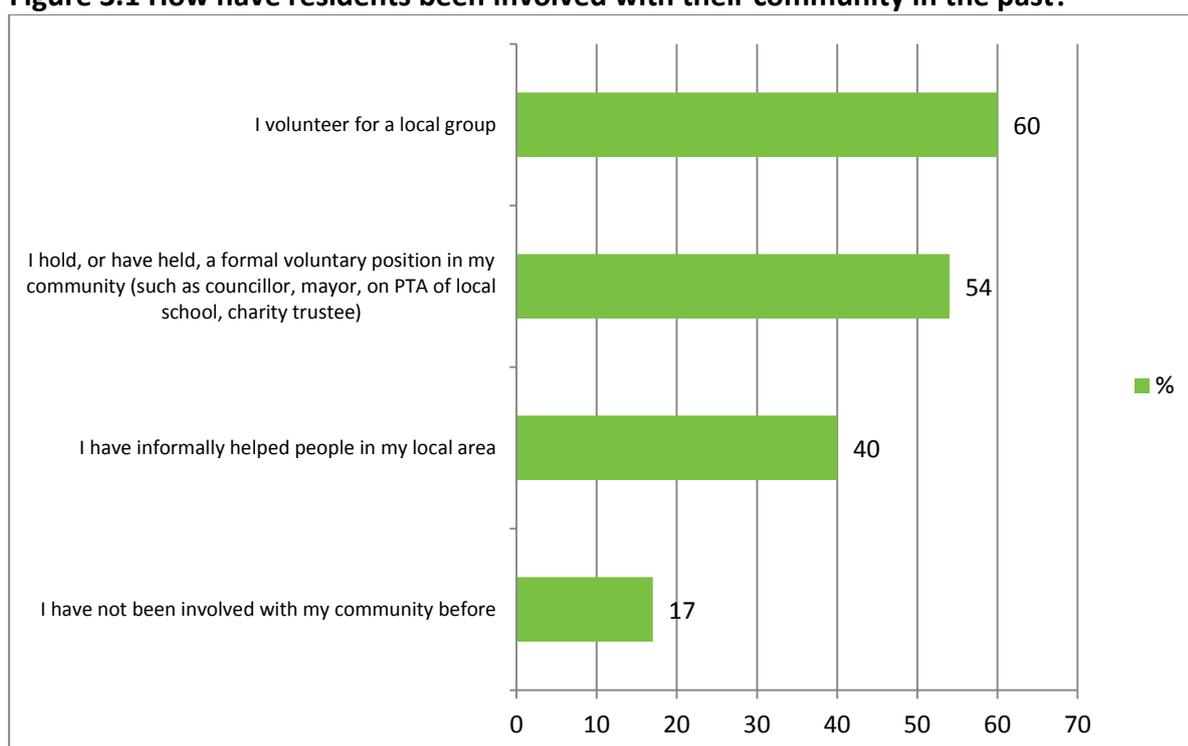
However, there are often clashes between institutions and their more formal modes of working against the more informal ways of Big Local partnerships (Gilchrist 2015). Areas at times have complained of interference and/ or lack of support from local councils (NCVO et al. 2014). Councils might not share the same view of what resident control means and might show impatience with the process and pace of community decision-making, as well as unwillingness to give up a sense of control (NCVO et al 2014). Yet, based on anecdotal evidence, there are a number of cases of fruitful collaboration between Big Local areas and local authorities, particularly as plans start translating into actions (CDF 2015b). This report does not attempt to measure linking social capital within Big Local, as to date there are limited findings, but this is certainly an aspect that demands in-depth research in the future.

# 3. Higher levels of local engagement

Who is engaging in Big Local, how and how much? Most of the work in Big Local areas is carried out by partnerships. These are made up of people who want and are able to take an active role. Partnerships have to reflect the demographics of the area and residents are expected to make up at least 51% of the membership.

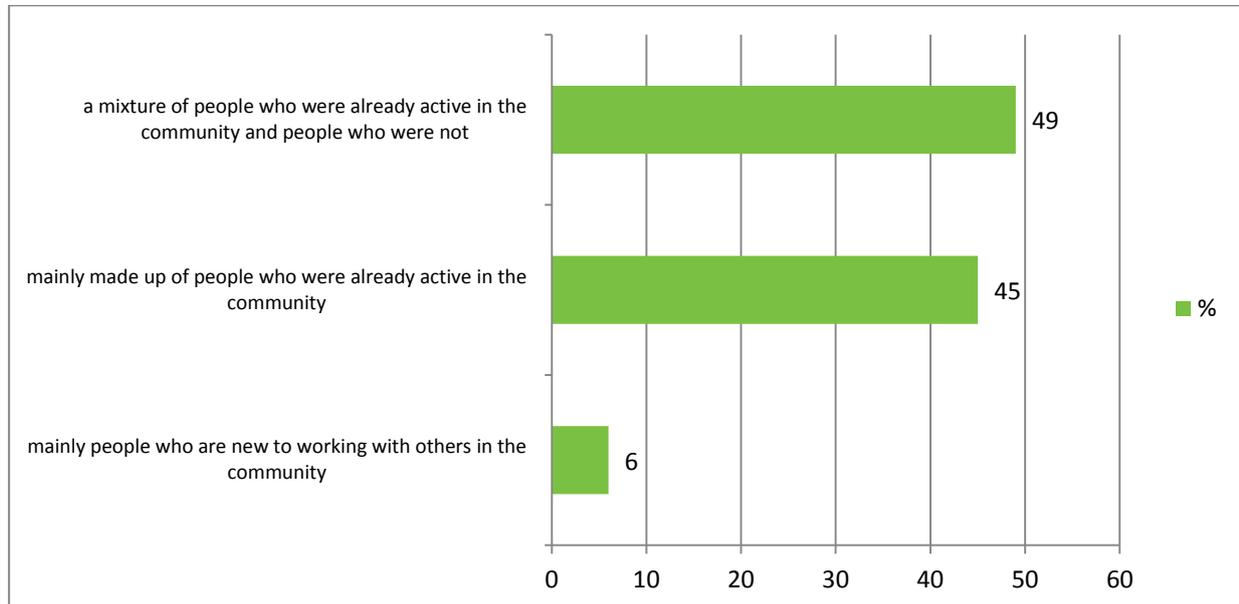
Unsurprisingly, most areas end up having a core group, a **'dedicated few'**, who generally have some level of experience of working with the community. This is reflected in findings from a survey of residents involved with Big Local carried out in 2013. However, a considerable percentage of people who are new to community activity are starting to get more involved: 17% of respondents reported they had not been involved with their community before Big Local.

**Figure 3.1 How have residents been involved with their community in the past?**



Source: Big Local residents survey 2013 (N=92). More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

**Figure 3.2 How active were the steering group/partnership members in the community before Big Local?**



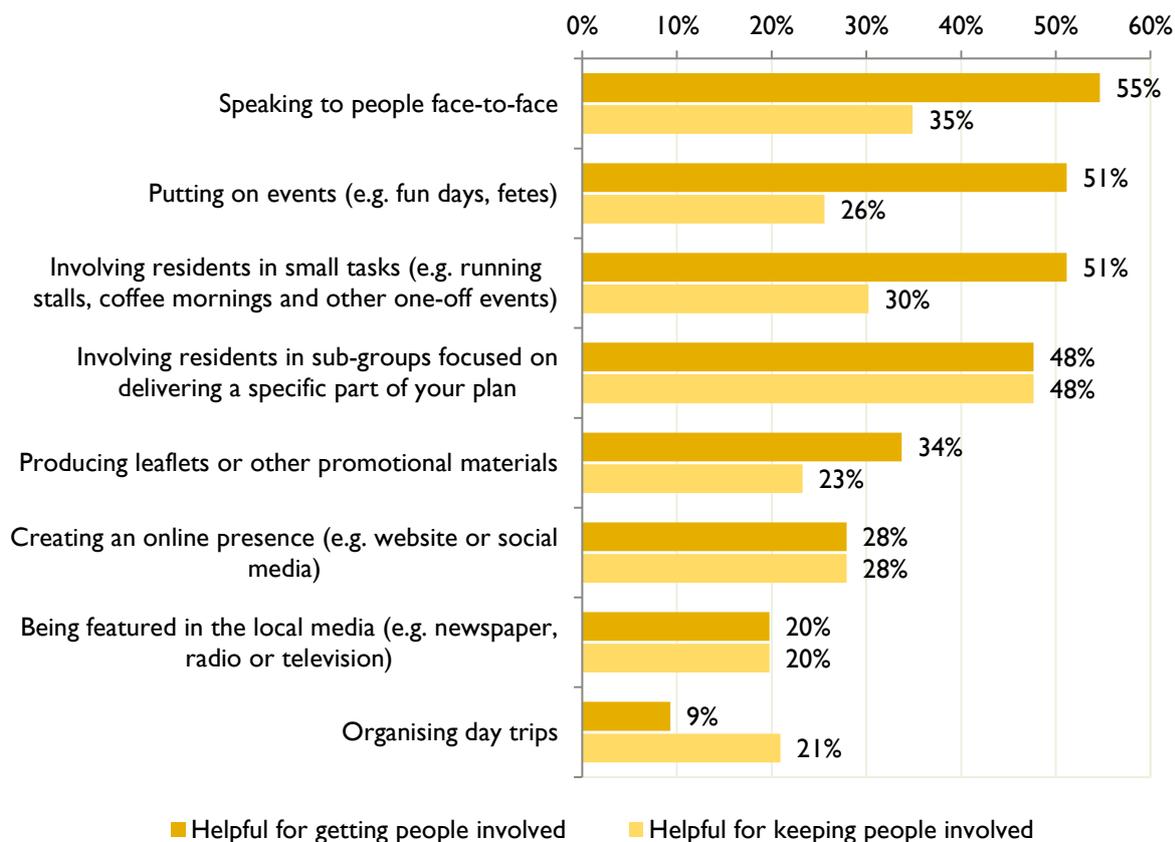
Source: *Big Local residents survey 2013 (N=100)*. A single response question. Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.

Engaging new people is one of the biggest challenges facing Big Local partnerships. CDF's report on *Influences on the development of Big Local areas (2014)* identifies several engagement methods employed by areas that promise good results (see methodology in the Appendix):

- **word-of-mouth** – for example, getting out and talking to people, particularly on estates;
- **mobile methods of consultation** – for example, a Big Local bus which can reach different parts of the community;
- **events** – for example, holding carnivals and fun days or having a stall at another community event;
- **fun and engaging methods** - for example, using Lego to get people to create their visions of the future.

Open events are a very effective way of involving people: a third of residents surveyed said they had attended one. In particular, events can prove helpful for recruiting people who are new to working with the community, with 50% of this group saying they got involved through an open meeting. Speaking to people face-to-face and offering micro-volunteering and small tasks have proved effective at addressing the issue of limited time capacity for most residents, helping to increase participation beyond the 'dedicated few', as shown in figure 3.3.

**Figure 3.3 What are the best ways of getting and keeping people involved in Big Local?**



Source: *Influences* (2015) (N=86). A multiple response question: respondents could select more than one answer, so totals do not add up to 100%.

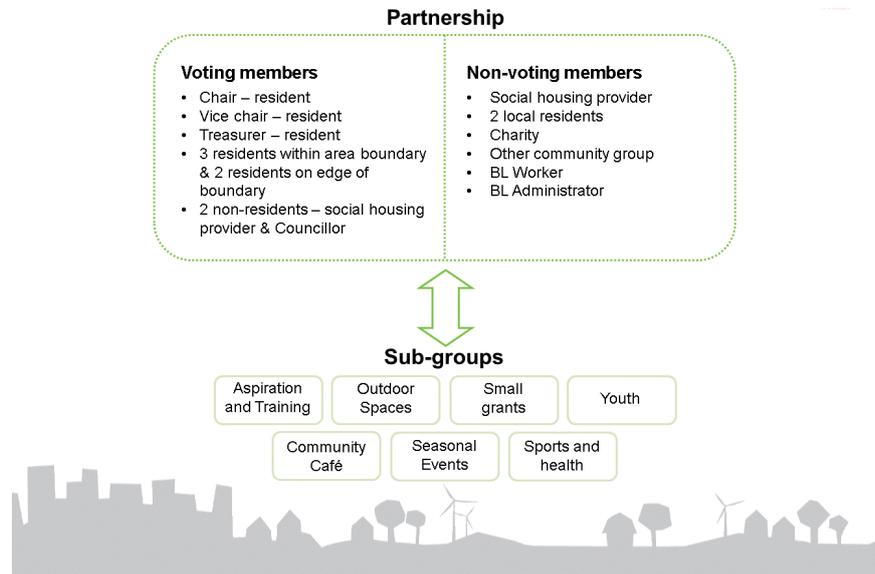
Overall, since the programme started, 150 communities (most with little or no tradition of resident-organising at a community-wide level, and none with experience of managing a community initiative on this scale) have seen core groups of active residents and local organisations come together to develop shared visions. These residents have put in thousands of hours of their own time to work with their communities, prioritise what is most needed and produce ambitious plans to address these priorities.

Much of the success of the programme will depend on the effectiveness and sustainability of these local partnerships and how inclusive and accountable they can be over time.

### 3.1 How do partnerships work?

CDF’s latest research on Big Local, *Influences on the development of Big Local* (2015a), finds that structures adopted by groups often tend to take a traditional committee form with a chair and regular meetings (see methodology in the Appendix). See figure 3.1.1 here below.

**Figure 3.1.1 Example of partnership structure, drawn by residents in focus group**

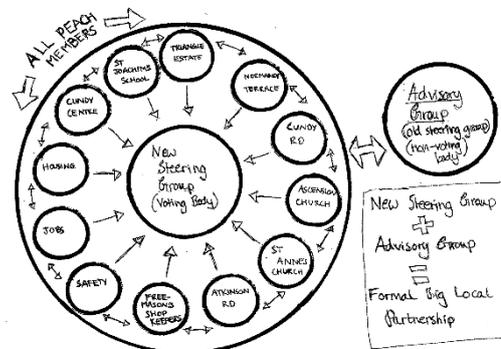


Source: CDF's Influences on the development of Big Local (June 2015).

The report distinguishes between steering groups and partnerships. Steering groups generally have a much looser structure than partnerships, drawing together a range of organisations and residents.

IVAR's *Annual Learning Review 2013-2014* (see Appendix for methodology) finds two main partnership structures and shows how each of these make connections with other community groups and local institutions.

- **Hub and spokes models** have a central 'core' that makes final decisions and attached sub-groups. For instance **PEACH** (Big Local area **Custom House**) uses grassroots groups to feed into a central decision-making body. A non-voting advisory group supports thinking and provides information.

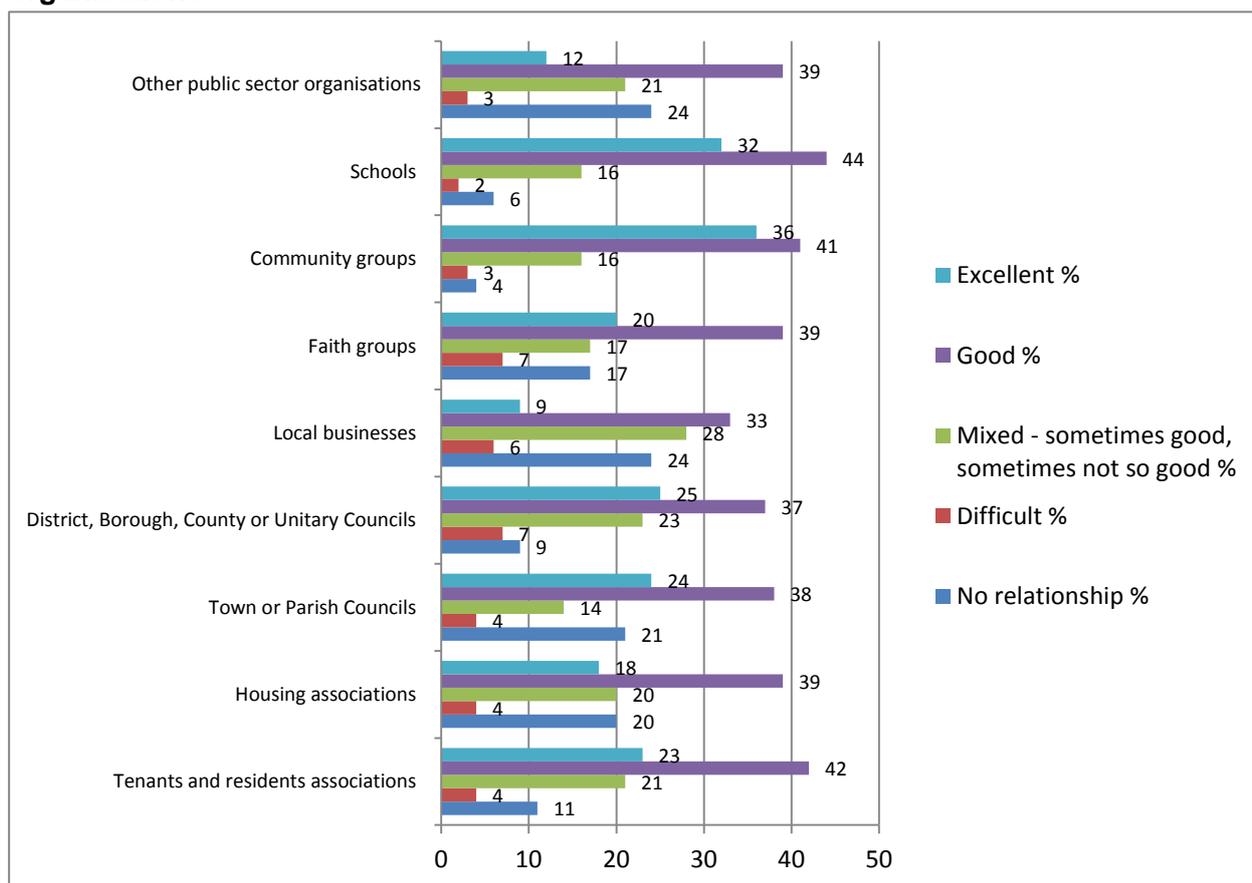


- **Commissioning models** see partnerships act directly as a grant giving and commissioning body, rather than using sub-groups. In **Kingbrook and Cauldwell**, for example, the partnership is made up of ten decision makers (of which seven are residents). They will: '[...] look to existing local partners to deliver projects, activities and services, through a combination of providing grants and commissioning. This will help to encourage as many local organisations as possible to play a role in the Big Local initiative, using existing networks and skills where possible.'

# 4. Greater networking among groups and associations

As examined above, Big Local area partnerships typically include people who have already been active in their community. In some areas this has made it easier to establish an active group of residents for Big Local. For example, in some areas the starting point for Big Local was through existing groups, sometimes alongside an open meeting. The figure below shows relationships between partnerships and other local organisations and community groups.

**Figure 4.1 The relationship between the steering group/partnership and other organisations**



Source: Big Local residents survey 2013 (N varied for each item from 72-95). A series of single response questions. Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.

Generally, areas with better relations with other local grassroots and organisations have fewer obstacles to overcome when trying to get people together. However, relatively high levels of pre-existing community activity can have a mixed impact. Some areas build effectively on existing

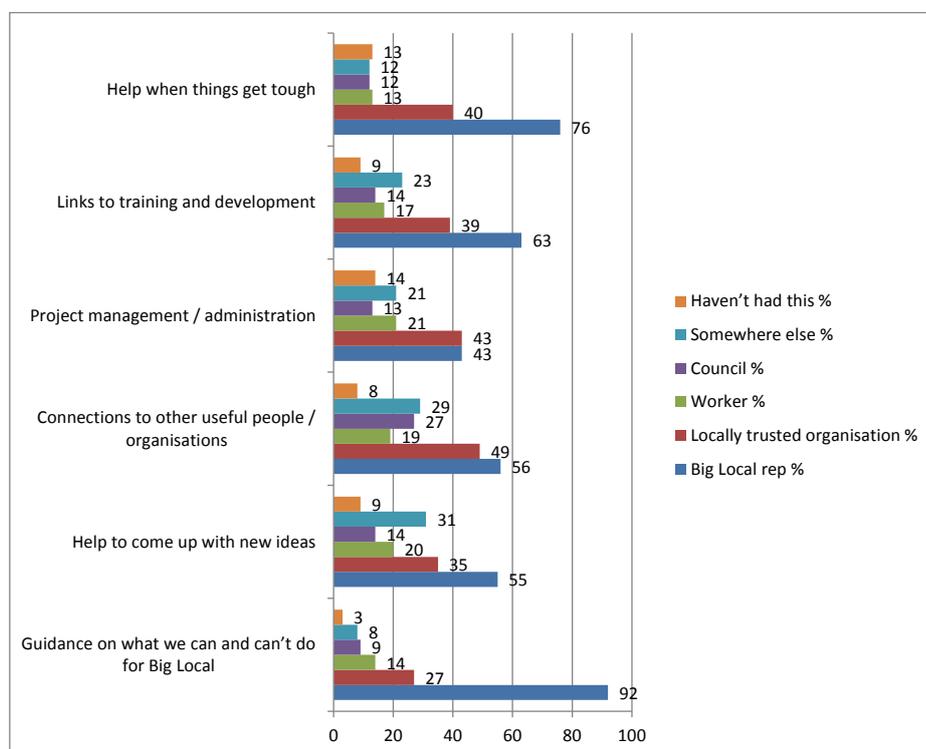
social capital, while others find it more difficult, as Big Local is perceived as something external by local community groups – ‘them’ rather than ‘us’ (see CDF 2014, p. 21).

Overall, the *Early years evaluation report* (NCVO et al. 2014) finds that a majority of the partnership members who took part in their survey believed their involvement with Big Local has increased their connections with others. 89% (n=231) said they had got to know more people in their area as a result of getting involved. In the evaluation workshops, participants reported meeting new people through Big Local in a number of different ways: by setting up steering groups and partnerships, attending events, running surveys, being involved in community research and consultation activities, or by volunteering in local hubs where Big Local activities take place.

Respondents also mentioned meeting people they would not normally have met, from different parts of the community, different ages, or different ‘status’ (for instance, working alongside councillors), which is a strong indicator of creating bridging networks. People involved have also learnt more about local organisations, services and businesses in their area.

Networking represents an effective way of increasing learning and getting access to valuable help and know-how. Many areas say they have received some level of support from somewhere else. For example, 31% received support and new ideas from other groups and organisations and 29% benefited from connections to other useful people and/or organisations.

**Figure 4.2 Sources of help and support accessed by residents**

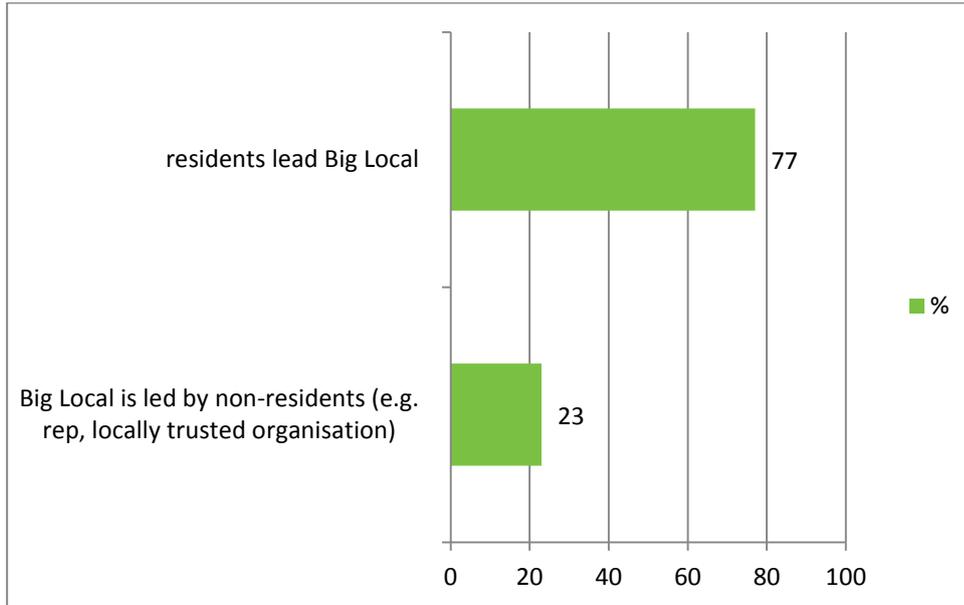


Source: *Big Local residents survey 2013* (N= 99). A multiple response question: more than one answer could be given so totals do not equal 100.

# 5. Increased local capacity

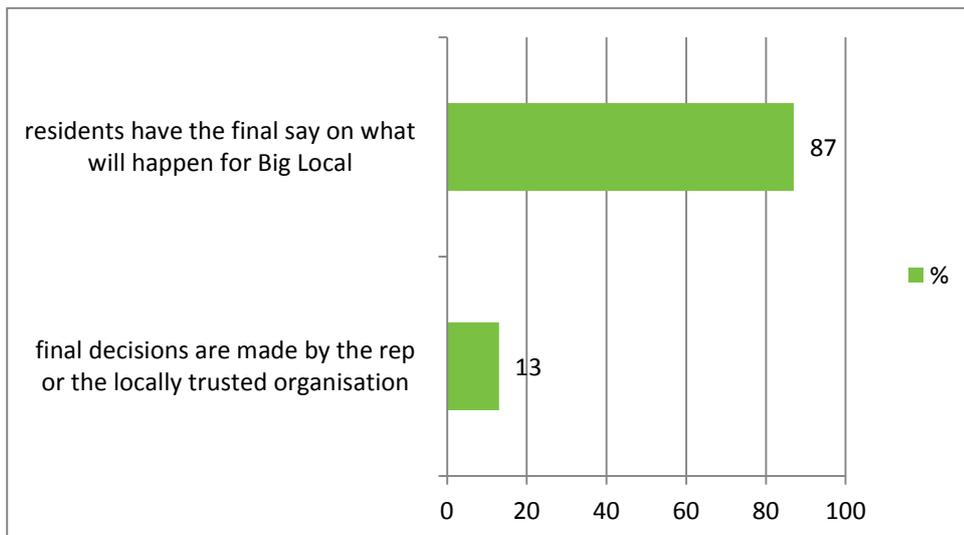
Although Big Local is generally being led by a small number of people involved in partnerships, many feel it is the residents that influence decisions on Big Local plans. Consultation and visioning exercises carried out to identify key priorities of plans ensure the wider community have a say in the process of creating the plan

**Figure 5.1 Who leads Big Local?**



Source: Big Local residents survey 2013 (N= 100). A single response question. Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.

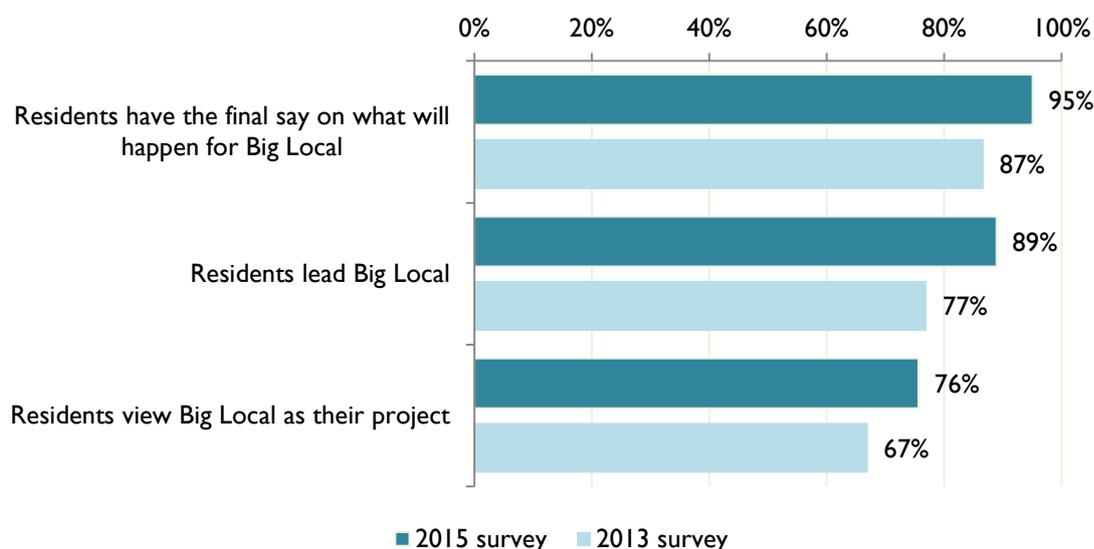
**Figure 5.2 Who makes decisions on Big Local?**



Source: Big Local residents survey 2013 (N= 98). A single response question. Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.

Figure 5.3 compares the results of surveys carried out in 2013 and 2015 (CDF 2015a). The percentage of respondents that felt residents have the final say, lead and view Big Local as their project has consistently increased since 2013. An overwhelming majority (95%, n=82) feel residents have the final say on what will happen in their Big Local area.

**Figure 5.3 What influence do residents have on decisions?**



Source: Influences on the development of Big Local (CDF 2015b) - Whether survey respondents agree residents lead Big Local, view it as their project or have the final say in Big Local (N=81/82) with comparison to 2013 survey (N=98-100)

Some areas have professionals involved, including people who have written town plans or set-up social enterprises, former councillors or experts in community development. Others bring different technical experience, such as web design or social media. Table 5.1 identifies key people and organisations and their degree of perceived influence in decision-making.

**Table 5.1 Relational map**

Key	People/ organisation	High influence (no. of areas)	Medium influence (no. of areas)	Low influence (no. of areas)
	Resident partnership or steering group	11	1	0
	Rep	11	0	1
	Locally trusted organisation	9	1	2
	Council	6	1	2

	Community groups	5	4	2
	Dedicated worker	4	0	0
	School	3	1	0
	Other residents	2	2	5
	Councillor	2	0	2
	Faith groups	2	2	0
	Voluntary and community sector organisations	1	1	0
	Housing association	1	1	1
<b>Local Trust</b>	Local Trust	1	0	1
	Businesses	0	0	2
	Other public sector organisations	0	1	2

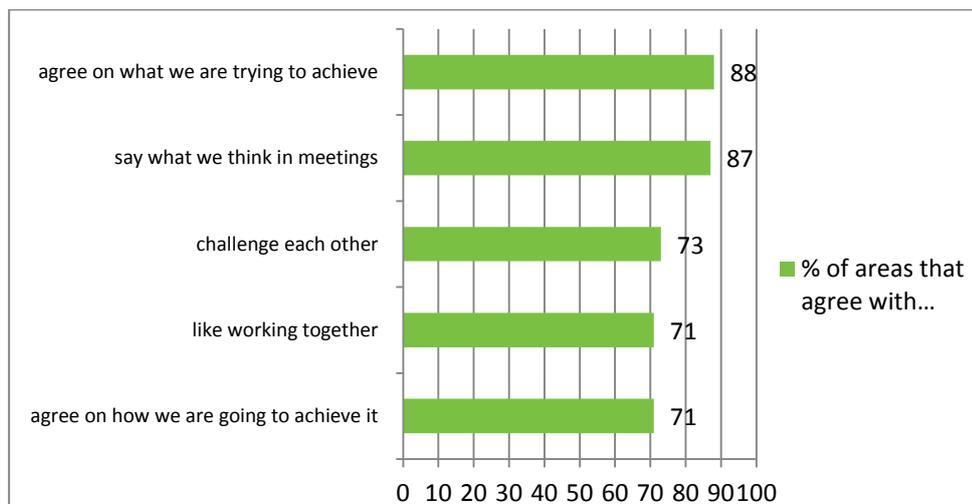
Source: Influences on the development of Big Local areas (CDF 2014)

Where possible, the groups identified in the table above act as flexible units whereby, if the residents are not able to fulfil a specific role, this will be picked up by another member of the extended team.

Residents also draw on an extended support network. Examples include:

- a community foundation ‘doing the legwork’ on proposals and admin work;
- students from local schools and/ or universities supporting with research;
- accessing free training from community and voluntary services;
- a town clerk advising on legal issues and insurances;
- a housing association providing a designer for branding.

**Figure 5.4 How the partnership/steering group works together**



Source: Big Local residents survey 2013 % of areas that agree with each statement represents 'agree' and 'strongly agree' responses. (N = 101). A series of single response questions. Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100.

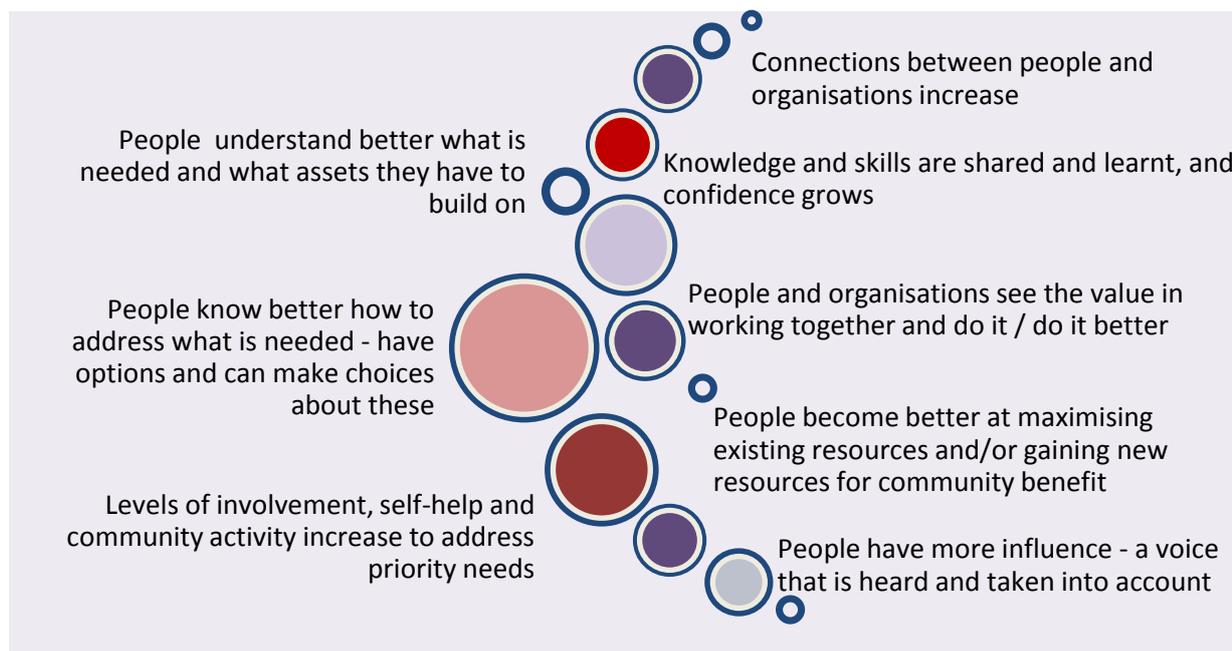
CDF's latest report (2015a) identifies a number of key team roles that develop to support partnerships and help them work effectively, within the context of shared leadership:

- **strategic thinker** – keeping an eye on the bigger picture and ensuring activities relate to desired outcomes;
- **do-er** – making things happen;
- **catalyst** – sparking new ideas and ways of doing things;
- **connector** – bringing together different people and groups across the area;
- **advisor** – providing expert advice and support;
- **coach** – supporting development and motivating others. This is often someone who is slightly removed.

These roles are often played by residents or people outside the formal partnership and may be filled by more than one person.

The figure below highlights a number of ways in which local capacity is increasing overall.

**Figure 5.5 Changes linked to capacity**



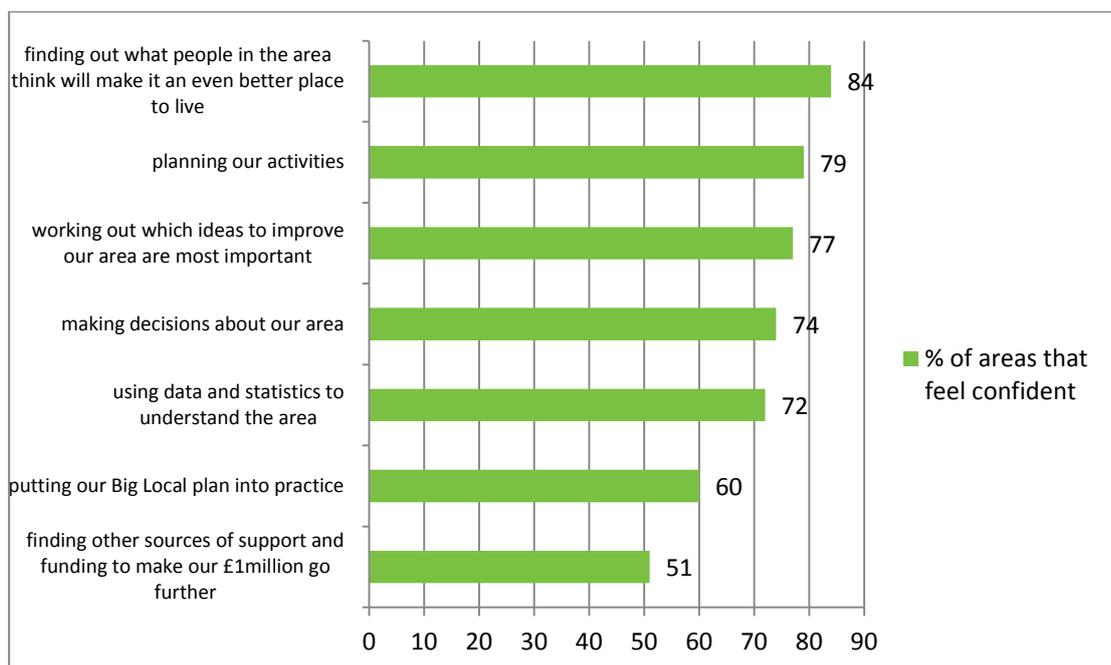
Source: *Early years evaluation report (NVCO et al. 2014)*.

## 6. Increased confidence and gain of new skills

72% of partnership members surveyed for the *Early years evaluation report* (n=228) stated that they had learnt new things and/or developed new skills as a result of being involved in Big Local. In evaluation workshops, residents with significant prior experience of volunteering or community work were just as likely to report they had learnt new things as those who were new to it. Even those who had previous experience of community initiatives reported that Big Local felt different from other community programmes and this has led to some interesting learning for all involved.

For those most actively involved – the partnership members - the *Early years evaluation* found strong evidence that many are growing in confidence, increasing their knowledge and their skills, particularly around working with others and planning activities and the practicalities of making Big Local happen – see figure 6.1.

**Figure 6.1 Steering group/partnership confidence**



Source: Big Local residents survey 2013. % of areas that feel confident represents 'very confident' and 'quite confident' responses. N varied for each item from 100 to 101. A series of single response questions.

A majority of partnership members reported that their involvement with Big Local made them feel more positive about where they live, and that they were contributing to building a stronger sense of community in their area. 68% of partnership members said they felt more positive about where they lived. 78% felt they were building a stronger sense of community (NCVO et al. 2014)

The first 100 areas to be launched were more confident than the final 50 who began their Big Local journey more recently. This suggests that residents' confidence is developing as they progress through Big Local.

There are different ways in which Big Local areas are learning new skills:

- learning from their local peers;
- learning from networking events and pilot projects;
- learning from people in other Big Local areas.

Resident learning from other Big Local areas generally takes place at national, sub-regional or thematic events. Areas also visit or make contact with other areas on their own initiative. Though only around half of the survey respondents mentioned this, it was one of the aspects of learning they praised most highly (NCVO et al. 2014).

*Influences* (CDF 2015, p. 12) reports that, 'regardless of the size and scale of projects that Big Local areas are undertaking in the local community, residents frequently describe the amount that they have learnt as one of the key successes of the Big Local programme so far'.

# 7. What next?

As Big Local areas are starting to implement their plans, we are already identifying different strategies. In their publication *Plans to action*, CDF (2015b) conducted interviews with five Big Local areas to understand how they delivered projects (for methodology see Appendix).

Four different methods of plan delivery were identified:

- **commissioning**– commissioning an organisation to deliver a project, with some tailoring for the Big Local area;
- **co-working** – working in partnership with an existing organisation, most often based in the area, who are already delivering something that meets Big Local priorities;
- **co-creating** – identifying a need in the area and developing a bespoke project to address this;
- **bidding** – developing a form and selection criteria. Projects apply and are awarded funds if they meet priorities for the area.

Each strategy entails challenges and opportunities, and the use of each is a testament to the important capacity building that has taken place in Big Local areas. The following table outlines the challenges and benefits of these different delivery approaches:

**Table 7.1 Different delivery methods**

Delivery method	Challenges	Benefits
Commissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May not be able to tailor to the needs of area</li> <li>● Knowledge of suitable projects for area is needed</li> <li>● Contracts and monitoring will need to be agreed</li> <li>● Communication between partners about responsibilities and outcomes needs to be clear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Easy to implement</li> <li>● Takes less time to commission an organisation or individual to deliver a project for an area</li> <li>● Builds knowledge of project delivery</li> <li>● Allows areas to build contacts and networks</li> </ul>
Co-working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identification of suitable partners</li> <li>● May not be tailored to the needs of area</li> <li>● Communication between partners about responsibilities and outcomes needs to be clear</li> <li>● Contracts and monitoring may need to be agreed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Draw on the skills and experience of partners</li> <li>● Learn from the experience of others</li> <li>● Build contacts and networks</li> </ul>
Co-creating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May require more time to develop than other methods</li> <li>● Have to be clear about the idea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tailored to the needs of your area</li> <li>● May focus on more than one priority</li> </ul>

	<p>for the project and how to deliver it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May need to identify new partners to help deliver</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May save money</li> </ul>
Bidding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A suitable application form will need to be developed</li> <li>● A good monitoring procedure is required to ensure projects meet what was proposed</li> <li>● Contracts may need to be agreed</li> <li>● May mean projects do not link or add value to each other, so failing to maximise funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Allows funding of a number of projects at the same time</li> <li>● May take less time as other organisations and individuals deliver the project for you</li> </ul>

Source: *Plans to action (CDF 2015b)*

The *Early years evaluation report* suggests that overall Big Local areas are happy with their rate of progress, though ‘they commonly feel their progress is slow’ (NCVO et al. 2014, p. 76). These findings were also reflected in CDF’s survey of Big Local areas (2015a). They found the most frequent response was that progress is slower than expected (41%, n=87), although a third feel it is progressing as they expected (32%, n=87). Two thirds of respondents are satisfied with their rate of progress, which represents an improvement in comparison to the 2013 survey of Big Local residents, when just over half were satisfied.<sup>5</sup>

As work progresses, new challenges will arise, not least from deepening cuts to statutory and voluntary services. Yet, a few years into the programme, we can already identify a few important key insights and lessons, particularly with regard to increasing social capital.

- There is evidence that Big Local is increasingly led by residents.
- New networks are being created, with shared leadership helping delivery.
- Getting the wider community involved has been one of the greatest challenges of the early years of Big Local. Although areas have been creative in reaching out to residents, many partnerships remain reliant on small numbers and might not be sufficiently reflective of the demographics of their areas. There may be an assumption that groups that have started out with a dedicated few will be able to widen and become more inclusive over time, but that does not appear to happen naturally (NCVO et al. 2014).
- Many of those most actively involved in Big Local have gained confidence and learnt new skills. Support may be needed to encourage new people to join partnerships and build their confidence, enabling ‘gatekeepers’ to welcome new active residents and challenging those who may need to step back, so as to allow others in (NCVO et al. 2015).
- Open events proved to be a very effective way of involving residents, particularly for recruiting people who are new to working with the community.
- Speaking to people face-to-face and offering micro-volunteering and small tasks have helped areas to increase participation beyond the ‘dedicated few’.
- CFD (2015a) finds that ‘Areas want to feel they are not alone in their journey; shared learning and promotion of Big Local as a national programme may help with this’.

- Greater clarity around monitoring requirements can also help areas with understanding the programme better and feel more confident in promoting it and engaging more people.

Overall, and with a focus on increasing social capital, we can argue that the process of defining priorities, coming together to address them and being able to see these priorities actually addressed may matter as much as what is actually prioritised and acted upon (NVCO et al. 2014). In this respect, these initial findings are encouraging and some impact on social cohesion is already evident. Research to date appears to show the merits of an approach to community development that is resident-led and asset-based. Big Local's willingness to take risks and encourage areas to come together and trial out, at their own pace, different strategies to improve life in their communities has the potential to unleash important community resources.

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# Appendix

## Research methods for selected studies referenced in this report

### Methods used for Big Local Annual Learning Review 2013-2014 (IVAR 2014)

Data was accessed from each partner and Local Trust to cover the period April 2013 to March 2014. Coding took place during March and April 2014 generating more than 200 references using NVivo 10.

Source	Data
Local Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Local Trust Board Reports – Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4</li> <li>● 50 Big Local Plans from 2013</li> <li>● 11 Big Local Plans from 2012-13</li> <li>● 50 wave three Getting People Involved applications</li> <li>● 50 partnership applications</li> <li>● Local Economy project applications (unused as UnLtd deferred report)</li> <li>● Dataset of total documents submitted to Local Trust from Big Local Community</li> </ul>
Renaisi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Renaisi Rep Quality Assurance reports to Local Trust – Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4</li> <li>● Renaisi RAW data from reps – Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4</li> <li>● Renaisi 'Networking Events' reports</li> <li>● Ongoing Issues log</li> </ul>
National Association for Neighbourhood Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Spring event synthesis report.</li> <li>● Spring event RAW feedback data</li> <li>● 15 Learning event reports</li> <li>● 15 Learning event specifications</li> <li>● Attendance data for spring events.</li> </ul>
UnLtd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Star People observations paper (unpublished)</li> <li>● Star People awards spreadsheet</li> <li>● Learning plan (unpublished)</li> <li>● Initial observations papers (unpublished)</li> </ul>
CDF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Getting Started wave 3 draft</li> <li>● Getting Started wave 2 report</li> <li>● Getting People Involved Round 2 report</li> <li>● Influences on Big Local Areas report</li> <li>● Dataset of GPI2 and GS survey responses</li> </ul>
IVAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2012-13 Annual Learning Report</li> </ul>

## Methods used for Influences on the development of Big Local areas (CDF 2014)

This evaluation used mixed methods of qualitative focus groups and interviews in a sample of 14 case-study areas and an online survey of residents. The areas are broadly representative of the spread of areas across regions for all 150 Big Local areas so the findings reflect Big Local as a whole. To take account of the nature of the area, the sample included eight in urban areas, four in rural areas and two in rural/coastal areas.

Activity	Description	People	Areas
Focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Between two and five actively involved residents in each area</li> </ul>	44	14
Interviews with locally trusted organisation representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>four councils for voluntary service</li> <li>two housing associations</li> <li>three local charities</li> <li>one local authority</li> <li>three other private or public sector organisations</li> </ul>	13	13
Interviews with paid workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some areas had a paid worker supporting Big Local. These workers were sometimes paid for using some of the Big Local funding and sometimes funded by a supporting organisation.</li> </ul>	4	5
Interviews with representatives of other supporting organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Areas were also supported by other local organisations and, where this was the case, we interviewed a representative. These organisations and individuals included council officers, councillors, school head teachers and charity staff.</li> </ul>	12	12
Interviews with star people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seven of the areas had at least one star person in June 2013 and we interviewed six star people in different areas.</li> </ul>	6	6
Survey	<p>The survey explored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the resident's role in Big Local and how and why they got involved</li> <li>the experience of the partnership or steering group and how it operated</li> <li>the support they had received, where this came from, how useful it was and</li> </ul>	101 responses/ response rate of 70%	145

- other support they need
- their views on the Big Local process and their progress along the journey

## Methods used for Big Local: the early years. Evaluation Report (NCVO et al. 2014)

Activity	Description	People	Areas
Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Questionnaire for steering group/partnership members</li> <li>● Distribution online and on paper</li> <li>● Focused on outcomes, satisfaction with support and resident-control</li> <li>● Open to all steering groups/partnerships</li> </ul>	236	66
Group Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A ten-point poster template/group exercise</li> <li>● Distribution by post for self-evaluation use</li> <li>● Focused on learning and outcomes</li> <li>● Open to all steering groups/partnerships</li> </ul>	175	35
Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A 2-3 hour facilitated evaluation workshop</li> <li>● Discussion, review tool for self-assessment of progress and outcomes</li> <li>● Focused on outcomes planning and assessment</li> <li>● Targeted at areas with plans in place</li> </ul>	63	10
Case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Development of ten case studies based on interviews and fieldwork /observation visits</li> <li>● Focused on learning and outcomes</li> <li>● Purposive sampling - thematically driven</li> </ul>	27	10
Reps survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An online survey using SNAP software</li> <li>● High proportion of open questions</li> <li>● Focused on exploring programme concepts and values as well as learning and outcomes</li> <li>● Open to all reps to take part (optional)</li> </ul>	37	86

## Methods used for *Influences on the development of Big Local* (CDF 2015a)

Visits and interviews to 15 Big Local areas and a survey sent to 150 Big Local areas.

The 14 areas that took part in the 2013 research were all re-visited. An additional visit was made to an area that was selected for participation in the 2013 research, but did not take part in interviews.

The case studies include: five areas from Wave 1, launched in July 2010; five areas from Wave 2, launched in February 2012; and five areas from Wave 3 launched in December 2012.

Activity	Description	People	Areas
Interactive focus groups with residents involved in Big Local	<p>Questions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Roles within the steering group or partnership;</li> <li>● Relationship with the rep, locally trusted organisation, worker and other key organisations or individuals;</li> <li>● Perceptions on the resident-led nature of Big Local;</li> <li>● Types of support and training accessed;</li> <li>● Activities and events over the last year;</li> <li>● Decision making; and</li> <li>● How they see Big Local evolving in the future.</li> </ul> <p>● As part of the focus group residents were to complete a survey as part of the focus group Open to all steering groups/partnerships</p>	49 residents	15
Interviews with a representative of the locally trusted organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This included eight community organisations/charities, two housing associations, two private/public sector organisations and one local authority</li> </ul>	13	13
Interviews with a Big Local worker where there was one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Out of the 15 areas, 10 had a worker.</li> </ul>	10	10
Interviews with organisations working with Big Local areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● These were defined as an organisation or person who was not a resident but who helped to support Big Local in the area, through activities or projects.</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Six organisations were interviewed, including a local authority, youth worker, a Big Local plan writer and an environmental charity.</li> <li>● Three areas did not identify any such organisation</li> </ul>		
Interviews with a Star Person where there was one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Of the nine areas with Star People at the time of our research, four such people were interviewed.</li> </ul>	4	4

## Methods used for *Plans to Action* (CDF 2015b)

**Interviews** were conducted with five Big Local areas and six non-Big Local community groups to understand how they delivered projects to address issues in their area. Only areas that had been awarded Big Local Plan funding before March 2014 were included, so that sufficient time had passed for them to develop projects from their plans.

**Plans and funding offer letters** were examined for types of priorities (for example, small grants, younger people, and community facilities). Those that had been awarded funding for staff or administrative costs were excluded because the research wanted to include activities, not running costs, of Big Local areas.

**A matrix of areas** was developed to include a range of priorities and activities in the sample.

Alongside the types of priorities and activities, the sample made sure there was a spread of regions and waves. Areas were excluded if they were already involved in other Big Local research projects.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/fair\\_share\\_phase3\\_rep.pdf](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/fair_share_phase3_rep.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> An area of increasing interest is virtual communities. These tend to be based around communities of interest rather than place and can help develop social capital of both bonding and bridging type (e.g. discussions groups on the internet).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/socialcapital/>

<sup>4</sup> ONS (Siegler 2014) has identified key surveys conducted in the UK that cover various aspects of social capital. Focusing mainly on government research, it summarises the data available under 4 major themes:  
 1 personal relationships;  
 2 social network support, including social interaction, social networks and social support;  
 3 civic engagement, including volunteering, participation, social engagement and commitment;  
 perception of community level structures or characteristics;  
 4 trust and cooperative norms, including aspects of trust, reciprocity and social cohesion.

<sup>5</sup> Wave 1 areas are slightly less satisfied with their progress than Wave 2 and 3 areas overall. This is perhaps a result of Wave 1 being launched before Local Trust had been established (CDF 2015a).