

# NO BOUNDARIES

A STUDY OF NETWORKS AND EMPOWERMENT



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## REPORT 7

### Networks and Empowerment: A Case Study

A Report to the Empowering Communities Consortium

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These reports, as with all research, reflect the views of those who took part and are a snapshot in time and there may be other perspectives that are not recorded.

Report by: Jan Crawley © South West Foundation for main report

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South West Foundation	The Evaluation Trust
Jan Crawley Director	Sarah del Tufo Principal Evaluation Worker
01275 333666	0118 966 4864
<a href="mailto:info@southwestfoundation.org.uk">info@southwestfoundation.org.uk</a>	<a href="mailto:sarahdeltufo@evaluationtrust.org">sarahdeltufo@evaluationtrust.org</a>

## **The Network Development Fund**

### **Introduction**

*Networks are all around us. We rely on them. We are challenged by them. We are part of them.*

Community members have long used networks to enable them to undertake all sorts of activities in their communities and neighbourhoods. They are a means of sharing of resources, of communicating, of adding mutual support and social interaction. They are also a means of working together to tackle or address issues that affect the lives of people in communities.

This study looks at a sample the networks in the South West Region many were funded by both the South West Foundation and Creating Excellence through the Network Development Fund. The final section takes a snapshot view of the Community Empowerment Networks in the South West Region. Community Empowerment Networks have been developing since 2002 and have been an important part in the empowerment agenda in assisting people to take part in and influence the Local Strategic Partnerships. This study is intended to be a plain simple statement of the activities that were undertaken in many of those networks. It focuses on how these networks have supported people to feel able to alter decisions which affect their lives and those they care for. The reader can dip in and out of this study to build up an overall picture of the value of those networks and of networking in general.

The Network Development Fund was set up in 2005 with funding from Creating Excellence and the South West Foundation. Existing and developing networks could apply for grants up to £1,000 to enable them to bring organisations and individuals together to share good practice, support their members and make information more accessible. The Fund was so popular that it was extended in 2007 with additional funding from both organisations. Just under 50 networks have been supported to date at a cost of £50,000. These networks range from networks of funding advice workers and development workers, to networks of homeless people, carers, older people, parents of mixed race children, parents of disabled children and networks of mental health services users.

The Foundation decided to undertake an investigative study of these networks to see what areas they were covering, whether the networks are able to give people the skills and confidence that they need to influence decisions that affect their lives and whether these networks link into the current drive for empowerment and engagement of communities and individuals in those communities.

Over 40 networks took part in this study either through responding to questionnaires, through face-to-face interviews and through the materials sent back to the Foundation in connection with their grant.

## **Geographical Areas Covered**

There is a wide geographical spread among the networks. Among the networks there are nine in Somerset, eight networks in Cornwall, seven in Dorset, five in Devon, four in Gloucestershire, two in Torbay, one each in Wiltshire and North Somerset. Seven of the networks cover the whole of the South West Region.

## **People Taking Part**

People taking part in the networks range from disabled researchers, homeless people, parents of disabled children, and survivors of domestic violence, to funding advice workers, and community development workers: people from marginalised groups coming together for mutual support and to campaign for their rights. The networks bring together both organisations and individuals.

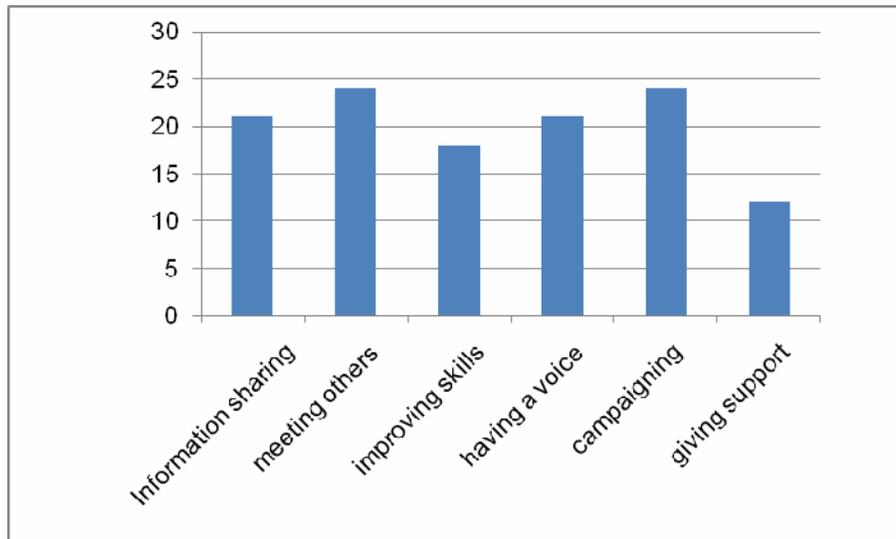
One network, the South West Seniors Network, works with and supports 28 older people's forums throughout the South West and through these forums has contact with 22,000 older people who can feed their views into the regional forum through their own local networks. From the information provided and from other networks at least 4,000 individuals have taken direct action in the networks and 1,000 organisations are members of the networks that are being supported, with many others being affected by their actions and activities.



## **Value for Money**

The size of grant allocated by the fund varied from £200 for Caradon Community Halls Network to £2,630 for the Disability Researchers Group but most grants were in the region of £1,000. The achievements of the networks, their ability to bring together so many people and organisations together for so little investment makes supporting networks and their development an economic use of funding producing high value for relatively little financial investment.

## Activities undertaken by the Networks



The networks are multifunctional. Meeting others, campaigning and having a voice appear to be their prime activities. Many of the networks, at the stage of applying for a grant did not necessarily have the aim of enabling people to have a voice or of campaigning but found that there was strength in being with others in a network and the majority at some stage have taken on a campaigning role even if this is not their prime purpose.

### Networking and Empowerment

*Empowerment is about self-help and collective organising. For the individuals, networking is self-empowering because it reduces isolation, provides supportive mentoring and offers personal advancement.* These were the thoughts of Cheater in 1999 but are very relevant to the activities undertaken in the 50 Networks funded through the Network Development Fund over the last two years.

No matter which way you look at these funded networks they clearly fit into the current desire to promote, encourage and support empowerment among individuals in communities. The networks provide the space and the opportunity for people to undertake the processes and activities which lead to both individual and organised empowerment.

The current government definition of empowerment is about giving people the skills and confidence to play a more active role in decisions that affect their lives, particularly decisions that are made by public authorities.

### **Self Empowerment**

Individual members of the networks reported self empowerment through mutual support. They reported that they felt supported by others in the network and no longer felt isolated. This is true whether the network members are 'professional' members of a network such as the funding advice workers supported through the Devon Funding Advice Workers Networks, or parents of disabled children who came together to exchange personal mutual experience.

### **Having a Voice**

It was the initial aim of a number of the networks to bring people together and to enable their members to have a voice and to influence those service providers that have an input into their lives.

The networks enabled a number of individuals to come together to tackle a variety of issues that were of concern to them.

*“Collective action is empowering in its own right because it enables people without much power to assert their interest and influence decision making.” (Gilchrist 2004)*

However, even the networks that did not have collective action as their initial aim, found their members coming together, sharing experiences and concerns and finding that the networks gave their members the power to approach and influence the decision makers. Caradon Community Halls' Network for example came together primarily to gather knowledge and information about running a community resource centre and to offer mutual support.

However, when their funding from the District Council came under threat they were able to use the strength of the network to influence the decision to retain their funding.



### **Networking for Better Practice**

A significant number of the networks had as their original aim the desire for members to come together to bring about an improvement in the members' skills through a mutual sharing of knowledge.

Cornwall Disability Researchers' Network for example started with the aim of improving research into disability issues by supporting those researchers with personal experience of disability to come together and share good practice. The membership then widened out to others who had an interest in disability issues. There have been many outcomes of this network around improving the research, making it more relevant and meaningful and ensuring that it is informed from the sources 'that count'.



### **Individual empowerment**

Individually, network members have indicated that they have felt empowered by increasing their skills and knowledge. Homeless people, carers of disabled children and disabled people themselves all indicated that they felt more empowered, not only by coming together with others and feeling strength in numbers, but also by increasing their self confidence and skills by enhancing their knowledge base of the system and their rights to services. The fact of the matter is that most of the networks are multifaceted with a myriad of benefits to their members. The Women's Network in Exeter has no aim to influence decision makers, but the women themselves, through being members of the network, have increased their skills, self confidence and feelings of well being and are better able to take part in their communities.

## The Case studies in brief

### AGILE

AGILE aims to achieve “a united voice for people aged over 50 living in Devon. It brings together existing organisations and agrees on united action”.

AGILE undertakes activities as a consultative body for older people. It also actively campaigns and lobbies for practical changes, which will improve the quality of life for older people (50+ years). The network aims to represent members’ views, feedback, requests and opinions at the highest governmental and ministerial levels.

Being a member of AGILE has helped members tackle a range of issues and take positive action. The AGILE network acts as a link in a chain of consultation between statutory, voluntary and health sectors. AGILE members’ views are represented:

- At a local level via Devon County Council and the proposed Senior Council for Devon
- At a regional and national level via the Older People’s Advisory Group (OPAG) South West.

AGILE members have succeeded in influencing a number of service decisions. For example AGILE campaigned over a reduction in numbers of hospital beds for older people, accessibility of community transport, especially bus services which resulted in Stage Coach in Exeter holding a staff training awareness day for older people looking at issues such as mobility problems. They have also campaigned on equality issues for older people and overcoming attitudes towards age discrimination in Devon.



As a consultative network for older people, AGILE works closely with Devon County Council’s Older People’s Champion and is represented on a number of decision making bodies such as Devon County Council Equality Reference Group and the Equality Steering and Scrutiny group. Through the network AGILE members can present a united voice. Among their ‘successes’ is their campaign to get an act of worship (e.g. a church service) to be broadcast on a mainstream TV channel on Sunday at an accessible time so that older people can participate in their own homes.

*Being a member of AGILE has helped older people to feel empowered, to feel their voices are listened to, their opinions are respected and in some cases, action is*

*taken as a result of their networking activities....*

AGILE represents “*a voice, not the voice, but a very strong voice for older people*” (a member of AGILE).

### **Caradon Community Halls’ Network**

Caradon Community Halls’ Network has received two consecutive grants from the Network Development Fund. One for £200 and one for £400. This network brings together representatives from Village halls, Guildhall (town council) Community Centres and Senior citizens’ halls in the district of Caradon in Cornwall. There are over 30 organisations that are members of the Network. The Caradon Community Halls’ Network aims to achieve sharing of information and knowledge between those responsible for the Community Halls. The Network holds meetings of its members and invites guest speakers to give information on topics relevant to community halls. It was not the initial aim of the Community Halls’ Network to act as a lobbying voice on behalf of the community halls but as the network developed it became clear that this role was needed. The Network now aims to achieve a united voice and recognition for the position of community halls in Caradon.

Membership of the Network has empowered people to take positive steps to tackle issues via lobbying and campaigning. A recent example is Caradon District Council which had decided to cut its grants for village halls. The Network members united and successfully lobbied and campaigned against these cuts. They have now appointed a district councillor as an ambassador for community halls who has attended network meetings to liaise with the district council finance department on behalf of their members.

Being a member of a network helped people involved in community halls to feel they have the knowledge and the confidence to lobby and campaign as a group. They feel that they do not have to accept sole or individual responsibility for their actions. The members feel that ‘government authorities take more notice of a group’; they will talk to, negotiate and respond to pressure from a group. For Caradon Community Halls Network there is strength in numbers.

The value of Caradon Community Halls Network seems to include:

- Lobbying and campaigning on issues that effect community halls and subsequently, community life
- ‘decoding’ complex legislation
- dissemination of vital information
- partnership working between statutory and voluntary sectors
- working within a clearly defined geographical area (Caradon)
- sharing best practice amongst community halls.

## **Cornwall Disability Research Network (CDRN)**

The Cornwall Disability Research Network brings together Academic researchers and social researchers who focus on research into disability issues. A number of the researchers themselves have personal experience of disability. Disabled people with an interest in research into disability issues also now take part in this network. The network includes representatives from a number of universities including the University of Strathclyde; Manchester University; Sheffield Hallam University; Cornwall College: Social work department; and the University of Plymouth: Faculty of Health and Social Work.

With a small grant of £1,500 the network has undertaken a number of activities including bringing researchers together, helping to overcome social exclusion by encouraging researchers to adopt a grassroots perspective based on consultation with people with disabilities - rather than taking a “top down” approach. Individual members with disabilities can identify issues and flag them up with researchers. As a result, their research is based on real problems, concerns and issues that directly affect people with disabilities.

Through contact with others in a similar field they gain peer recognition; credibility and respect for their work.

The network has helped people with disabilities to connect with:

- County and district level public sector workers
- Learning disability services
- Academic researchers at universities in the South west and the UK
- Healthcare professionals.

## **Disability Wessex: Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Parent Support Group Network**

The Autistic Spectrum Disorder parent support group network organizes activities to provide interactive social contact and extended peer support amongst parents/carers of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Parents and carers of children and young people with ASD (aged 4 years – 21 years) participate in the ASD parent/carers support group network. The network operates on a wide geographical area from Bournemouth and Poole to Exeter and South Somerset.

The ASD Parent Support Group Network aims to be a mutual peer support unit for parents/carers of children and young people. It aims to achieve an



increase in support, knowledge and understanding for carers of children and young people with ASD and a decrease in social isolation for their parents/carers. The aim is to lead to an improvement in the quality of life for people with ASD, their parents/carers, family networks and the extended community.

Through the Network which is supported in its development by Disability Wessex, parents/carers and family members have received guidance to tackle issues such as:

- Schools, education
- The benefits system
- Social services system
- Access to employment services
- Lack of support at University for disabled students.

Connections with public sector agencies in the past has been quite an issue often taking a long time to bring about changes or positive results. However the ASD network has successfully tackled issues such as a refusal for access to a social services assessment and obtaining access to proper employment services, which resulted in one young person finding a job.

Members are empowered as they have access to information and knowledge of their rights. They therefore feel empowered to take on more for themselves and represent their views to people in roles of authority. With support and backup from the ASD network, parents/carers can raise issues, ask questions or challenge official systems, such as education, social services or benefits and allowances.

Membership of the ASD network also allows members to overcome any perceived 'intimidation' as they are equipped with factual knowledge and information. When they are aware of their rights they are in a stronger position to take action to bring about changes and improvements to their situations.

### **The Women's Network in Exeter and East Devon**

*"There is a growing body of evidence suggesting there are advantages in being well connected into strong social networks. Membership of social networks promotes physical and mental health"* (Pilisk and Parks 1986).

The Women's Network in Exeter and East Devon welcomes women members whose social activities for one reason or another, have become limited. This may be as a result of many factors such as: emotional difficulties; loss of confidence; bereavement; fulfilling a carer's role; ill health; financial pressure or mental health issues.

The network aims to be a social network and is open to any woman, low in confidence, who wants to take part in activities and will benefit from support, friendship, acceptance and tolerance and bring about a better sense of well being. The network aims to empower individuals rather than organisations and works with women who are socially isolated, emotionally distressed low in confidence and self-esteem to take a fuller part in their communities. The development of the Network has been supported by MIND in Exeter.

Each regular social group is supported by an “anchor”, who is a woman who volunteers to attend a venue at an appointed time to welcome and support other network members. In total, around 120 women participate in the Women’s Network in Exeter and East Devon.

All the women need courage to attend their first open welcoming gathering.

The direct beneficiaries include:

- Women who have been disempowered by the mental health services
- The women using the network, who value the company of other women
- women who would not have the courage to go out otherwise.



The network aims to empower women who are socially isolated, emotionally distressed low in confidence and self-esteem.

The Women’s Network also helps women to overcome barriers to work: the network helps to build up an inner confidence. Women can “practise” their social skills, overcome communication problems, and work out some problems and difficulties in a warm, supportive environment. Therefore the women are more likely to feel confident and secure and move on to work - possibly volunteering, part-time employment or working in a supported environment.

The network has greatly helped women to feel empowered, to speak up and share experiences. The women feel stronger in themselves and empowered to extend their social activities within a larger circle and to undertake roles of commitment or responsibility as “anchor” women.

In an advocacy role, the network has helped people to connect with statutory agencies, such as:

- Housing
- Benefits
- Social services

- Counselling and psychotherapy services.

## **PULSE**

Pulse is a network operating in Bournemouth and Poole aiming to bring together members from Black and Minority Communities, their families and other interested parties in Dorset. It has also taken on the role to help their members to tackle the issues that affect them and to enable them to have a voice.

Pulse produces a quarterly newsletter to inform its members but it also listens to the issues that members raise and looks at how these can be tackled. One example of this is the incidence of racial abuse that parents felt their children were suffering at school. It was difficult for people to have the confidence to raise this issue as individuals but Pulse has successfully raised the issues with the local school and the topic is now being treated with a greater urgency. The network received a grant of £1,000 to help them with their networking activities including their newsletter. The newsletter is now on its 8<sup>th</sup> issue, they have over 300 members on their database and their meetings regularly have more than 60 attendees.



## **Devon Funding Advice Workers Network DEFAN**

DEFAN was the first county-wide network of funding advice workers to make contact with the Network Development Fund. Their contribution to the development of funding advice workers networks across the region has been significant.

Encouraging others by their example and being ever present at events and gatherings, DEFAN have shared their experiences with others. There is now a funding advice workers network in every local authority area in the region as well as a regional network raising the profile of the value of funding advice workers.

The network is open to all external funding advisers who provide free funding advice for the voluntary, community and not-for-profit sector. DEFAN members include representatives from:

- Devon County Council
- District Councils throughout Devon including the unitary areas of Torbay and Plymouth
- Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSs)
- Devon and Cornwall Constabulary

- Southern Association of Voluntary Action Groups for Europe (SAVAGE)
- Dartmoor Sustainable Development Fund
- Community Council of Devon
- Devon Renaissance.

Several DEFAN members also belong to GEORGE: a regional umbrella network including all the county funding advisors' networks in the south west region. Local networks such as DEFAN now have a way through their local networks of raising issues on a regional basis. Research is currently underway to look at the possibility of a national network.

The ultimate beneficiaries of DEFAN are community groups and people from the voluntary, community and not-for-profit sectors requiring funding advice. These groups benefit from the wealth of knowledge and expertise shared by DEFAN members.

DEFAN has helped people to take positive action to tackle several issues. Being a member of DEFAN has helped some people to tackle the issue of professional empowerment within their own organisation, particularly in the statutory sector. Individual members may feel isolated within their own organisation due to a basic lack of understanding of the role of a funding advisor. Membership and attendance of DEFAN empowers them, as it leads to increased recognition and understanding of the funding advisor's role from their own colleagues and managers. Being a member of DEFAN has also helped people tackle funding issues, both internally and externally. Internally, DEFAN members might fight a case to retain voluntary sector funding within their own organisations, working in partnership with other DEFAN members. For example, a district council worked with the Community Council for Devon to deliver grants for village halls. Externally, DEFAN members meet with funders, who attend DEFAN meetings as external speakers. DEFAN members can ask questions, find out realistic information and possible trends for forward funding plans.



### **Funding Advisers Network - Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset**

While having a very similar role to DEFAN the Funding Advice Workers Network Dorset has a very clear remit to influence the delivery of funding. One of the more recent networks they are looking to work on the local funding compact and to link into the Local Strategic Partnership in Dorset. They are currently involved in

Challenging Sir Clive Booth, Chief Executive of the BIG Lottery Fund, about the lack of funding going into Dorset. Having the evidence and statistics to hand about lottery funding, and having the backing of the organisations in the Network has enabled the network to successfully raise the profile of what is happening in Dorset with regard to funding allocation.

### **Somerset Fundraisers Group (SFG)**

The Somerset Fundraisers Group does not aim to be a lobbying network. Its main aim is to enable its members to share fundraising issues, raise the profile of fundraising in Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations in Somerset, including:

- Partnerships amongst individual members
- Peer support and increasing communication amongst peers
- Establishing a network that is not elitist or exclusive
- Promotion of a sharing ethos
- Overcoming barriers and secrecy towards fundraising information; Enabling or facilitating members to meet, exchange details and keep in contact outside the group meetings
- Social interaction.

Somerset Fundraisers Group has 30 member organisations and 50 people belong to the network. The Group has undertaken various activities including:

- Organising regular quarterly meetings held on a rotational basis around the county, hosted by member organisations.
- Liaising with external speakers to give talks and presentations on relevant fundraising issues at the meetings
- Offering opportunities for social contact, peer support, discussions on fundraising topics.

The Somerset Fundraisers Group has taken positive action to tackle the issues of secrecy, competitiveness and social isolation among fundraisers. Traditionally, fundraisers are protective and secretive as they are operating in a highly competitive field. The Somerset Fundraisers Group has allowed members to share their experiences, knowledge and information, through regular meetings, email bulletins and networking events. Members have realised that fundraising can be more of a sharing experience rather than a competitive job.

Being a member of Somerset Fundraisers Group helps to make members feel empowered by:

- Improving their knowledge and understanding of fundraising issues
- Promoting active participation in group discussion

- Increasing their confidence and self-esteem
- Gaining respect amongst their peers.

### **Regional Community Development Network South West**

The Community Development Network for the South West Region has the aim of bringing together individuals involved in community development work for mutual support and to share good practice. The Network also aims to promote the value of community development and to give community development workers voice. The network has over 100 members and has been involved in organising and delivering community development events to over 300 people.

The South West Community Development Network has been working with other regional community development networks including the South East Network, the Yorkshire and Humberside Network, the North West Network and the North East to help to develop a national network of community development workers to ensure that local community development workers can link into the regional network and have a voice nationally.

The South West Network is also a member of the Community Development Challenge Group which operates at a national level, supported by the Department of Communities and Local Government it raises the profile and the value of Community Development.

The Network has been involved in lobbying around the loss of Community Development posts in local government. It also encourages and gets involved in the delivery of community development training in the region, working with the Federation For Community Development Learning.



## Community Empowerment Networks (CENs)

This section forms part of the Regional Community Empowerment Research Project and was undertaken by the research team for that project.

### Introduction



Within the current drive for community empowerment is the desire that a wide and diverse range of individuals from communities will be enabled to take part in decisions that affect their lives, particularly in regard to the services that they receive in their neighbourhoods and communities. Current research into the state of empowerment suggests that community members struggle to take part in the decision making process. That consultation is often not 'real' and that authorities often only pay lip service to the ethos of consultation.

One of the measures introduced by Government in 2001, through the Community Empowerment Fund was Community Empowerment Networks. These networks were designed specifically to enable people to become involved in decisions around the regeneration of their neighbourhoods and to enable individuals to have an influence over the way in which Neighbourhood Renewal Funding was allocated. In order for people to take part, support, training and access to information were all vital ingredients. Despite the fact that there was evidence of existing appropriate structures and opportunities which could have been built upon to develop the Community Empowerment Networks, it appears that lead organisations were forced to set up new and separate structures which often confused the community.

Significant funds were invested in the Community Empowerment Networks but, over the years, despite the evidence from the evaluation of the networks that the Community Empowerment Networks needed more investment and time to develop, the history of these networks shows a confusing funding history, with often diminishing funds. As the source of the funding altered, so the focus of the networks also shifted to meet the funding focus. At a time when the government is seeking to involve people in decision making, the way that the Community Empowerment Networks have been treated has been brought into question. Below is a brief history of the Community Empowerment Networks in the South West, in Plymouth, Bristol and Cornwall. It has been drawn from a range of conversations with those involved in the networks and existing materials, in particular a research report from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister( Making Connections: An Evaluation of the Community Participation Programmes published in 2005:ODPM.) gives us the background to these networks.

### **Background to Community Empowerment Networks**

The Community Empowerment Fund, Community Chests and Community Learning Chest were introduced in 2001 in the 88 Neighbourhood Renewal priority areas. They were designed to:

- encourage more people to become involved in the regeneration of their neighbourhoods;
- help residents gain skills and knowledge they need to play an active role in Neighbourhood Renewal;
- and support the involvement of the local community and voluntary sector as an equal partner in local strategic partnerships

As part of the Government's drive to reduce the gap between England's poorest communities and the country as a whole, the 'National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal' published in 2001, sought to influence change at a local level.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund provided a grant to 88 of the most deprived local authority areas to fund the work of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) in improving services and targeting resources more effectively.

The Community Empowerment Fund was designed to support the development of Community Empowerment Networks within each area, with the main purpose of supporting Voluntary and Community Sector involvement in the local Strategic Partnership. Most Community Empowerment Networks were new structures. While some had a membership of individuals, most were a network of organisations.

## The Funding

From 2001-2004, around £43 million a year was invested in developing community empowerment networks, first through the Community Empowerment Fund and then through the Single Community Programme, in order to foster community involvement in neighbourhood renewal initiatives. Other funders have now come on board. The networks in 2005 were said have funded at least 25,000 community projects, provided the LSPs with access to a wider community network and led community development work.

The Community Empowerment Networks have had a confusing funding past, with the initial funding coming through Community Participation Programmes, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the Single Community Programme. Some networks later went on to be funded by the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund, some managed to pick up on local funding and ChangeUp funding, while others have closed through lack of investment.

An evaluation of the Community Participation Programmes published in 2005 by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit found that the development of Community Empowerment Networks depended mainly on local circumstances and capacity as well as the history of relationships between local players.

The main activities of the networks were identified as building links between local groups; developing networks and improving cohesion and co-operation with the Voluntary and Community Sector. The evaluation in 2005 found that the Community Empowerment Networks were able to influence the way in which Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) were being run. The Community Empowerment Networks were recognised for their crucial role in representing community interests on the Local Strategic Partnerships. By giving Voluntary and Community Sector representatives an acknowledged place on LSPs they were 'building links with service providers, gaining the respect of partners and influencing the way that Neighbourhood Renewal monies were spent'.(ODPM:2004). They also gave marginalised groups greater success in decision making and gained influence over the way in which Neighbourhood Renewal Funds were spent. However their progress depended on LSP development and the Voluntary and Community Sector members still tended to be treated as junior partners

There was a general agreement in the evaluation that Community Empowerment Networks were making headway, but that more time was needed for Community Empowerment Networks to extend their reach.

*Expectations of the Single Community Programme need to reflect the time it takes to build cohesion and trust, especially in fragmented and divided communities and to ensure that skills and resources are on hand to address conflict and fragmentation where these occur.*

There was the strong suggestion in the evaluation that more time was needed for the Community Empowerment Networks to come to their full potential. There was also a strong warning that if Community Empowerment Networks were to continue to make progress, it was important to safeguard their levels of funding in the new Safer and Stronger Communities Fund.

*LSPs need to make a commitment as soon as possible to ensuring longer term future of Community Empowerment networks under the proposal of Safer and Stronger Communities Fund, if good staff is not to be lost. (ODPM:2005)*

It appears from current evidence that this protection of funding did not take place in many areas and where some networks did go on to obtain funding from this source; it was not at a level that the networks had previously received.

### **Community Empowerment Networks in the South West Region**

In the South West Region three areas were funded to develop Community Empowerment Networks, initially through the Community Empowerment Fund. Networks were set up in the three areas that came within the 88 most deprived neighbourhoods in the country; in Bristol, Plymouth and Kerrier/Penwith. In each case the lead organisation was a major player in the Voluntary and Community Sector.

#### **Plymouth Community Empowerment Network**

Plymouth Community Partnership (PCP), as the largest infrastructure organisation in the city, has led and developed mechanisms for community representation supporting networks of community organisations and activists for the past 11 years. For example, PCP placed by election and supported community representatives on the Pathfinder LSP and SRB Partnership.

In 2004, Government funding was awarded for the development of Community Empowerment Networks (CENs) in the 88 most deprived local authority areas in England, including Plymouth. The aim was to help marginalised community and voluntary sector groups to get more involved in the LSP and in decisions affecting the delivery of local public services.

In Plymouth, building on its existing role, PCP was funded to form a CEN and was the lead accountable body of a consortium incorporating the REC, PETRA, Plymouth Guild and Refugee Action. The CEN existed as a separate entity with its own website and dedicated staff, undertaking a range of outreach, development and support work.

Although initially Government Office wished the Network to be open to individuals as well as organisational members, it later decided that the focus should move away from individuals and back to organisations and priority neighbourhoods. Funding was reducing at this time. A new group (Plymouth Individuals Group) was established for

those who had been individual members of the Community Empowerment Network but it never actually met.

In 2006 the Network was mainstreamed into PCP. This development has enabled the future of community engagement and empowerment to be more focused, efficient and to provide value for money for service providers and local people.

In April 2005 a Safer and Stronger Communities Fund (SSCF) was introduced to bring together funding streams aimed at tackling crime, anti-social behaviour and drugs, empowering communities and improving the condition of streets and public spaces, prioritising the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. In 2007 with the introduction of Local Area Agreements (LAAs), funding from the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund was ring fenced to support community engagement work for one year in Plymouth.

PCP's key objectives are thus to:

- ensure the community sector has strategic representation on the LSP Board and its associated Theme Groups: Healthy, Wealthy, Safe and Strong, and Wise;
- ensure equity through best practice;
- increase the knowledge and skills of community groups so they are able to:
  - manage their organisation effectively;
  - build the effectiveness of their organisation to meet the needs of the community they serve;
  - resource their organisation appropriately;
  - influence decisions that affect their work and their community.

Through its Neighbourhood Renewal Outreach Worker and other staff, PCP now leads on the community engagement work for Plymouth City Council associated with the LSP and LAA. For example, staff have:

- worked in partnership with Stonehouse Action to secure funding and publicity for events to engage the community;
- facilitated a series of neighbourhood 'Question Time' events, to enable service providers involved in the LSP an opportunity to listen to the concerns of local residents in order to make improvements to service delivery;
- helped Devon and Cornwall Police to prepare for and undertake its PACT consultation work in 43 neighbourhoods.

In addition, PCP trains and supports the community representatives on the LSP, and maintains a membership network of 350 organisations and community groups across the city. It publishes a monthly magazine, *Get Engaged*, that aims to inform and involve the sector in the ongoing work of the LSP and provide opportunity for feedback from the community representatives.

PCP is also very active in the LSP at a strategic level, through the work of its Director and Assistant Director. PCP takes a particular lead on the 'Safe and Strong' Theme Group, of which PCP's Director is the Vice Chair.

*The Chair of the SSCF is the Chief Superintendent of Police. He is a real champion of engagement / empowerment work... and has a firm belief in the importance of the 'strong' agenda... both at strategic and operational level. (Plymouth Community Partnership)*

### **Bristol Community Empowerment Network (CNET)**

In Bristol again there were already strong networks and representation embedded into the work that Voscur, the local CVS had been undertaking. Voscur had previously received funding from the Single Regeneration Budget to undertake this type of work and it had underpinned Voscur's way of working for a number of years. Voscur already had the framework for empowerment networks within regeneration activities, based around geographical areas and themes, including equalities and food networks. The Community Empowerment Network funding came in 2001. It was related to Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) and was specifically about helping groups in NR areas engage with NR structures and the Local Strategic Partnership, which was responsible for NR. Voscur wanted to build on existing networks but, as with Plymouth, was told that it had to develop a separate empowerment network.

The Community Empowerment Network funding was split between Voscur and the Black Development Agency in Bristol. The Black Development Agency and Voscur worked in partnership to run the Community Empowerment Network which was called CNET.

*It was quite confusing for communities to have another new network also for a variety of reasons this structure did not work. Voscur*

The Network funding was then transferred to the Single Community Programme Fund, funding was reduced and a third infrastructure organisation was introduced by Government Office and so funding for representation was further diluted. The accountable body for this funding transferred from GOSW to the Quartet Community Foundation, and the funding continued to reduce, year on year. When the Single Community Programme ended CNET did not have enough resources to continue to offer all of the services.

From 2006 Voscur received Neighbourhood Renewal Funding to develop and support a Neighbourhood Renewal Residents' Forum. The idea was to support residents from Neighbourhood Renewal Areas to enable them to link into and take an active part in the Local Strategic Partnership (The Bristol Partnership) and its Regeneration Delivery Group.

*Although it was hoped that the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund would pick up the funding for this network, this funding has now been allocated to the ChangeUp Consortium and the Residents Forum and VCS networks will have to submit a case*

*to receive the funding. It is also likely again to be at a reduced level. The funding is not ring fenced for the network. Voscur*

### **The Benefits of the Network**

CNET as the Community Empowerment Network was called, used to receive £120,000 per annum. This funding is now significantly reduced. There is now no central government funding to support Voluntary and Community Sector representation to the structure that it introduced (i.e. the Local Strategic Partnership). Voscur continues to support local networks of Voluntary and Community Sector organisations with the aim of influencing the Local Strategic Partnership and members feel that the Voluntary and Community Sector representatives are now 'taken more seriously' but it has taken a lot of time and investment to enable this to happen, and to ensure that people are kept informed and enabled to take part. The Bristol City Council Community Development Investment budget will now contribute towards the cost of representation to the Bristol Partnership, but there is not enough money to do this well, (for example, provide one to one support to reps, produce regular bulletins, information packs or training). Also, investment in representation by the Council is at the expense of other Voluntary and Community Sector activity not being funded.

The members have however been able to challenge and influence some of the officers' views within the Local Strategic Partnership agenda because they are well informed and they know what the issue is on the ground. The Council Officers have, at times, had to go back and review their reports and people have been able to influence decision making, including, for example, where funding has been allocated. A representative from Voscur is now chair of the Local Strategic Partnership and the Black Development Agency is also represented at the Partnership.

### **Cornwall Community Empowerment Network**

In Cornwall it was the Penwith and Kerrier Districts (West Cornwall) that were eligible for Community Empowerment Funding. Prior to the CEF there was already a network, Penwith Inter-link, operating in the Penwith District, facilitated by Penwith Community Development Trust (PCDT). A conference organised in the area agreed that the right mechanism for a Community Empowerment Network in West Cornwall was through the roll out of the Inter-link into the Kerrier district. These two Inter-link networks became known collectively as the West Cornwall Community Network.

Although Inter-link was originally set up for members of the community and voluntary sector, statutory agencies and individuals found it useful too. The CEF enabled the employment of Inter-Link workers who provided locality meetings, newsletters, training and an annual conference. Membership grew to approximately 1,200 across West Cornwall during this funded period.

Over the years the network has also invested in websites, newsletters, e-mail discussions and briefing groups as well continuing with their main focus of enabling links between residents, the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Local Strategic Partnership, (where the VCS has five seats on the main partnership and at least two seats on each of the Partnership Delivery Groups). Support was provided to the VCS representatives to ensure that they had the skills, knowledge and expertise to be active participants in the decision-making process.

The Community Chest funding was one of the mainstays of West Cornwall Community Network, with many small groups becoming involved in the network through the grant funding. To ensure marginalised and deprived communities were being targeted, the Grants Officer worked closely with the Inter-link workers and relevant organisations.

The good practice of Inter-link was recognised outside of West Cornwall and as the CEF was coming to an end, ChangeUp funding enabled the work of the Inter-links to be rolled out across the whole of Cornwall, with further funding coming from the Local Area Agreement. Inter-link is one of the components of the Strong One Outcome which is a stretch target: *'To empower local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision-making and the delivery of services.'*

Although PCDT and other partners within the ChangeUp Consortium have secured this funding, this has not been an easy task, with staff often facing redundancy. Ensuring continued funding for this type of work remains a challenge in Cornwall, especially due to the changes taking place with the move to the new Unitary Authority. There will probably be 16-19 Community Networks within the new Unitary Authority and discussions are taking place about the role of the VCS in these and the part that Inter-link, as a 'community empowerment network, will play. However, the issue of adequate investment in this work remains!

*Consistent, effective, properly mandated Voluntary and Community Organisation representation at county level is needed to build trust and confidence in statutory partners...but funding is required to enable quality engagement.* Penwith Community Development Trust

## **Community Empowerment Networks and the Current Empowerment Agenda**

The Community Empowerment Networks in the South West Region have survived in a variety of frameworks but the main aim of enabling the community to have an input and a say into the Local Strategic Partnership has remained at the centre of their activities. Initially their reach only extended into the Neighbourhood Renewal areas and most of the South West does not have access to Community Empowerment

Networks. However, they provide a model for giving people skills and confidence to influence decisions, a role closely aligned to the current drive for empowerment. The

puzzlement for many is why investment in these networks is being reduced rather than expanded at a time when their role is being sought throughout the region.

*It is ridiculous that government is introducing the Duty to Involve from April '09 whilst ending funding to Community Empowerment Networks in March '08. This will mean loss of learning, skills and capacity for residents and local groups. Voscur*

**NETWORK DEVELOPMENT FUND LIST**  
**BASIC INFORMATION ON SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS**

<b>Name of lead organisation:</b>	<b>East Cornwall CVS</b>
<b>Network:</b>	<b>Cornwall Funding Advisors Network</b>
Amount of Grant:	£1,000
Area:	Cornwall
Purpose of Network:	Increasing capacity and skills of funding advisors; To obtain funding for projects and initiatives; Strengthen the Network and increase partnership working.
Purpose of Grant:	To provide for the cost of holding networking events e.g., venues and refreshments.
<b>Name of lead organisation:</b>	<b>GLOSCAT</b>
<b>Network:</b>	<b>Cotswold e-learning forum</b>
Amount of Grant:	£1,000
Area:	Cotswold
Purpose of network:	Inspire community learning with a focus on e-learning and citizenship; Widen access to education, advice and learning services; through partnership working improve location, provision and support services; share resources and knowledge.
Purpose of Grant:	to cover the costs of travel, venue hire and to produce an evaluation and funding strategy.
<b>Name of lead organisation:</b>	<b>Mendip Community Support</b>
<b>Network:</b>	<b>Mendip Voluntary Sector Forum</b>
Amount of Grant:	£900
Area:	Mendip
Numbers involved:	80 organisations

Purpose of Network: The voluntary sector forum is focussed on skills exchange, advice, support, networking and signposting. Open to voluntary and Community groups not just care organisations.

Purpose of Grant: Improve existing Forum structure; increase number of meetings; improve accessibility.

**Name of lead organisation:** **West Howe Investing in People**

**Network:** **West Howe Community Action Network**

Amount of Grant: £1,000

Area: West Howe Estate, Bournemouth

Numbers involved: 28 agencies

Purpose of Organisation: Share information; identifying need; plan for the future; campaign and lobby on behalf of the residents.

Purpose of Grant: To develop a register of members; meetings; venue hire; produce terms of reference for the network.

**Name of network:** **Forest of Dean Youth Workers Network**

Amount of Grant: £1,000

Area: Gloucestershire

Numbers involved: 92 local organisations

Purpose of Organisation: to encourage young people to become involved in their community; increase capacity and skills of young people; share information on youth work activity; maintain a youth work directory; identify training needs; establish and support subgroups.

Purpose of Grant: Deliver minimum of eight training courses per year. Four networking meetings per year plus an AGM. Update directory. Set up a website.

**Name of lead organisation:** **South West Dorset Multicultural Network**  
**Amount of Grant:** **£1,500**  
Area: Dorset  
Numbers involved: 200 on newsletter circulation; 15 committee members  
Purpose of Organisation: To join together to celebrate cultural diversity; To end isolation faced by people from ethnic minorities; Provide support for each other; To work towards understanding the effects of racism; Reclaim roots and to recognize their great contribution to British society.  
Purpose of Grant: To hold a network planning day to set priorities; Training in counselling skills.

**Name of lead organisation:** **Living Options Devon**  
**Network:** **Devon Physical Disability Forum**  
Amount of Grant: £1,500  
Area: Devon  
Numbers involved: 90 organisations  
Purpose of Organisation: A representative and advocate group; partnership working with other organisations.  
Purpose of Grant: Initial start-up conference; research and event planning; to pull all physical and sensory disability organisations together that are known to be active in Devon currently.

**Name of lead organisation:** **SPLITZ**  
**Network:** **SPLITZ Support Service Network**  
Area: Wiltshire  
Purpose of Network: Provide support services for vulnerable disadvantaged families; children's domestic violence support work; domestic violence workshops for women; Voluntary Perpetrator Programme for men; Residential home for teenage mothers; Art workshops for women with mental health issues.  
Purpose of Grant: Service Users Forum to meet three times a year.

**Name of lead organisation:** Somerset Waterways Development Trust

**Network:** Somerset Waterways Network

Amount of Grant: £1,000

Area: Somerset

Numbers involved: Eighty Trust members; two boat clubs; representatives from local organisations and councils.

Purpose of Organisation: To rediscover and share the waterways and canals of Somerset.

Purpose of Grant: Attract new members through interesting meetings; networks of informed supports; listen to people's views; promote the Trust; improve quality of waterways.

**Name of lead organisation:** MIND Exeter and East Devon

**Network:** Women's Network Exeter

Amount of Grant: £1,000

Area: Devon

Numbers involved: Approx 150.

Purpose of Network: To improve social contact and quality of life to those women who have become isolated through mental health issues through networking. The network would be open to all women and not just referrals from social services.

Purpose of Grant: To offer bi-monthly meetings; bi-monthly newsletter.

**Network:** Community Development South West

Amount of Grant: £1,500

Area: South West

Numbers involved: 90 individuals

Purpose of Organisation: Supporting the development of a regional network of Community Development workers in the South West; putting on events including training; publishing information.

Purpose of Grant: Map existing relevant networks and forums and work in partnership with them; set up a database; dissemination of information; two events.

**Name of network:** **Pulse**

Amount of Grant: £1,000

Area: Bournemouth, Dorset, Poole.

Purpose of Network: To support people from the BME communities to network and to enable them to have a voice.

Purpose of Grant: To fund network activities including the first network magazine.

**Name of lead organisation:** **Teignbridge Voluntary Sector Forum**

**Network:** **Teignbridge Council for Voluntary Service**

Amount of Grant: £1,000

Area: Teignbridge, South Devon

Purpose of Network: To set up four thematic groups form the networks. Members include Older people; people with learning disabilities; individuals with issues; children young people and families.

Carry out research and recruit new members

Purpose of Grant: To set up four thematic groups within the network.

**Name of Network:** **South East Cornwall Healthy Living Forum**

Amount of Grant: £400

Area: Cornwall

Purpose of Network: Improve the quality of life and health of the community in East Cornwall through partnership working and networking

Purpose of Grant: Put on an event showing the benefit of happiness on health. Plus members getting to know each other through networking.

**Name of lead organisation:** Cornwall Waste Action

**Network:** Cornwall Waste Action Network

Amount of Grant: £1,000

Area: Cornwall

Purpose of network: To bring together organisations in Cornwall that have an interest in sustainable waste management and to help them to promote sustainable waste management practices and use of resources.

Purpose of Grant: To aid expansion; website development; leaflet plus an event to launch the network and the website.

**Name of lead organisation:** Bristol East Side Traders BEST

**Network:** Women in Business Networking Group

Amount of Grant: £800

Area: Bristol

Purpose of Organisation: BEST works in the deprived areas of Easton, Ashley and Lawrence Hill. It is a social enterprise who will support the network.

Purpose of Grant: To bring women together who have a business to increase confidence and skills to assist their businesses e.g., putting on training and networking events.

**Name of Network:** AGILE

Amount of Grant: £750

Area: Devon

Purpose of Organisation: Represent and be the voice for older persons living in Devon. To provide opportunities for older people; help to improve services and increase recognition of the contribution older people make.

Purpose of Grant: Toward networking activities and to produce a newsletter and hold meetings.

**Name of lead organisation:** **Disability Wessex**  
Network: Autistic Spectrum Disorder Group  
Amount of Grant: £830  
Area: Dorset  
Purpose of Organisation: To provide a space for parents/carers to gain support from their peers also to learn self advocacy.  
Purpose of Grant: Twelve meetings to move the network along; to set up more groups and to begin the process of being self sustaining.

**Name of lead organisation:** **Dorset Agenda 21**  
**Organisation:** **Dorset Climate Change Coalition**  
Amount of Grant: £1,000  
Area: Dorset  
Purpose of Organisation: The network includes Dorset Energy Advice Centre; Dorset County Council and Dorset Agenda 21. The purpose is to encourage sustainable energy use.  
Purpose of Grant: Meetings and secretariat support.

**Name of Network:** **SPAAG**  
Amount of Grant: £1,122  
Area: Dorset/Bournemouth  
Purpose of Organisation: The relief of poverty, sickness and distress amongst people who are homeless; Educate the public on the issues of homelessness; Advice and support for homeless people and those who are working with the homeless.  
Purpose of Grant: To provide Information including a local leaflet of services for people who are without a home.

**Name of Network:** **Women’s Action Network Dorset (WAND)**  
Amount of Grant: £1,000  
Area: Dorset  
Numbers involved: 1000 women will attend the launch  
Purpose of Organisation: To support women in difficult circumstances; provide activities to reduce isolation and provide a social network  
Purpose of Grant: Launch event for the network and website design.

**Name of lead organisation:** **Dept. of Social Responsibility – Diocese of Gloucester**  
**Network:** **Gloucester Funding Advisors Network (GeFAN)**  
Amount of Grant: £1,000  
Area: Gloucestershire  
Purpose of Organisation: Support and mentoring to funding advice workers; increase expertise; to share knowledge and expertise; obtain funding; to act as a voice; share resources and good practice.  
Purpose of Grant: Travel expenses for voluntary sector members so they can attend meetings.

**Name of lead organisation:** **Voluntary Action North Somerset**  
**Organisation:** **Funding Advice Network North Somerset (FANNS)**  
Amount of Grant: £884  
Area: North Somerset  
Numbers involved: 15 organisations  
Purpose of Organisation: Support funding advice workers in sharing information and best practice; to provide funding advice.  
Purpose of Grant: Room hire; meetings; travel costs etc.

**Name of lead organisation:** Rural Action – Rural Community Council for Somerset

**Network:** Taste of North Somerset (ToNS)

Amount of Grant: £1,000

Area: North Somerset

Numbers involved: More than 112 members

Purpose of Organisation: ToNS set up to promote local food to local people and help support the rural food and drink economy

Purpose of Grant: To revitalise ToNS; update information; create website; update database; promote the network; re-launch event; co-ordinate training events.

**Name of lead organisation:** Taunton Deane CVS

**Organisation:** Community Workers Forum

Amount of Grant: £1,000

Area: Taunton Deane

Purpose of Grant: Holds two meetings a year to update and inform community workers. Would like to formalise the network; aims and objectives; provide venues; travel and childcare costs; administration.

**Name of lead organisation:** Somerset Voluntary Sector Network

**Network:** Somerset Funding Advisors Network (SOFAN)

Amount of Grant: £1,500

Area: Somerset

Purpose of Grant: SOFAN supports funding advice workers; sharing information and good practice; increase the quality and availability of funding advice in the county.

**Name of lead organisation:** Equality South West  
**Organisation:** Lesbian Gay Bisexual South West Network  
Amount of Grant: £800  
Area: South West  
Purpose of Organisation: The Network will be a forum of organisations of and for LGB people working in the south west region. The objects are that all regional structures and organisations talk effectively with and listen to the issues of LGB people and to eliminate discrimination.  
Purpose of Grant: Travelling expenses for members; publicity.

**Name of lead organisation:** National Institute for Mental Health: NiMHE  
**Network:** Learning Network  
Amount of Grant: £1,000  
Area: South West  
Purpose of Organisation: To combine the expertise of NiMHE and NIACE in the south west to improve access to learning and skills for people with mental health needs.  
Purpose of Grant: Six network meetings; two seminars.

**Name of lead organisation:** Evaluation Trust/South West Forum  
**Organisation:** South West Performance and Evaluation Network  
Amount of Grant: £1,000  
Area: South West Region  
Purpose of Organisation: Train, support and inform those involved in working in evaluation. To promote the value of evaluation  
Purpose of Grant: Web based signposting of evaluation, performance tools, resources and people based in the south west.

**Name of Network:** **South West Seniors Network**  
Amount of Grant: £1,000  
Area: South West region  
Numbers involved: 28 forums = 22,000 people  
Purpose of Organisation: Promote the welfare and interests of older people; to combat ageism; increase opportunities.  
Purpose of Grant: Travel expenses of committee members and associated costs.

**Name of lead organisation:** **South Somerset MIND**  
**Network:** **South West Network of User Groups (SNUG)**  
Amount of Grant: £1,000  
Area: Somerset  
Purpose of Organisation: To bring together mental health service user groups across the south west region  
Purpose of Grant: To hold meetings; transport costs; venue hire.

**Name of lead organisation:** **Teignbridge CVS**  
**Organisation:** **Teignbridge Voluntary Sector Forum**  
Amount of Grant: £1,000  
Area: Teignbridge  
Purpose of Organisation: To promote the interests of the V&CS in Teignbridge; share information and best practice; build up the capacity of the sector; to understand and contribute to community planning.  
Purpose of Grant: Set up four quarterly thematic forums: older people, disabled people and carers; learning disability and mental health; children and young people.

**Name of Network:** **Torbay Advice Network [TAN]**

Amount of Grant: £1,000

Area: Torbay

Numbers involved: 20 organisations

Purpose of Organisation: TAN overall aim to improve the quality, consistency and accessibility of services and to pilot innovative multi-agency training.

Purpose of Grant: Venue hire and administration costs; to hold meetings which will develop and increase the membership; improve information sharing.

**Name of lead organisation:** **Townsend Community Association**

**Network:** **Townsend Together Team (3 T's Network)**

Amount of Grant: £350

Area: Bournemouth

Numbers involved: Approx. 50 agencies; 20 local residents; 9 young people

Purpose of Organisation: To bring agencies together to build the community of Townsend and to work to the community action plan

Purpose of Grant: To set up a website for the network and support networking activities.

**Name of lead organisation:** **East Bristol Advice Services**

**Organisation:** **Advice Centres for Avon**

Amount of Grant: £1,200

Area: Bristol

Numbers involved: 35 organisations

Purpose of the Network: Represent the interests of Avon's Advice Centres; exchange information; promote advice centres; provide training.

Purpose of Grant: To develop a Yahoo news group this would give an up to date information store; provide publicity for the advice centres; expand membership.

**Name of Network:** Caradon Community Halls Network  
Amount of Grant: £200 (First Grant)  
Area: Caradon District  
Numbers involved: 45 member organisations  
Purpose of Network: To promote the benefit of community halls within the district  
Purpose of Grant: The cost of venue hire and refreshments for one year.

**Name of Network:** Caradon Community Halls Network  
Amount of Grant: £500 (second grant)  
Area: Caradon  
Numbers involved: 68 members (increased from 45 at first grant)  
Purpose of Network: Research into issues affecting village halls. To provide training and support.  
Purpose of Grant: Event for members including speakers, funders related organisations 80+ attended.

**Name of lead organisation:** Cornwall Disability Forum  
**Network:** Cornwall Disability Research Network  
Amount of Grant: £1,630  
Area: Cornwall  
Numbers involved: 30 plus researchers and university representatives  
Purpose of Network: To provide the opportunity for debate on disability research issues to people who are conducting or are interested in conducting research in Cornwall that has potential to support disabled people in Cornwall.  
Purpose of Grant: Two Network meetings will require specialist equipment; catering; administration; plus two steering group meetings and an end of year conference.

**Name of lead organisation:** Cornwall Centre for Volunteers  
**Organisation:** Cornwall Volunteer Managers Forum  
Amount of Grant: £700  
Area: Cornwall  
Purpose of Network: Provide an opportunity to network; share information and best practice.  
Purpose of Grant: Cost of Network meetings for one year.

**Name of lead organisation:** Penwith Community Development Trust  
**Network:** Cornwall Wide Inter-Link  
Amount of Grant: £1,000  
Area: Cornwall  
Numbers: 300+ organisations involved  
Purpose of Network: Provide an opportunity to network; share information and best practice and solutions to problems plus updating strategic issues.  
Purpose of Grant: A launch event to bring sub-county interlinks together to network-over 250 attended the event.

**Name of lead organisation:** MIND Taunton and West Somerset  
**Network:** Somerset Fundraisers Interest Group  
Amount of Grant: £939  
Area: Somerset  
Numbers involved: 66 members  
Purpose of Organisation: Bring people who are interested and involved in fundraising in Somerset together; increase skills; disseminate information.  
Purpose of Grant: To expand the network into a county wide organisation and set up a membership system; advertising costs.

**Name of lead organisation:** User Participation in Somerset  
**Network:** Somerset Mental Health Network  
Amount of Grant: £925  
Area: Somerset  
Purpose of Organisation: To support organisations working on mental health issues in Somerset; forum for sharing knowledge and good practice; providing peer support.  
Purpose of Grant: Administration; venue; refreshments; phone and postage for five monthly meetings to set up the network and thereafter self financing from membership fees.

**Name of lead organisation:** Intercom Trust  
**Network:** LYNX  
Amount of Grant: £1,000  
Area: South West  
Purpose of network: To support individuals and organisations that work with young gay men in the region.  
Purpose of Grant: To support the running costs of the network and support communication needs.

**Name of Network:** DEFAN  
Amount of Grant: £1,000  
Area: Devon  
Purpose of Network: To support funding advice workers in the Devon area.  
To promote good practice among funding advice workers and to raise the profile of the value of funding advice workers to communities.  
Purpose of Grant: To enable DEFAN to review its activities and to look at its future.

**Name of Network:** **West Somerset Disability Network**

Amount of Grant: £1,000

Area: Minehead and West Somerset

Purpose of Network: To support disabled people in West Somerset to network and have a voice.

Purpose of Grant: To support the running costs of the network and to enable it to set up a database of contacts and increase in numbers.

**Name of lead organisation:** **Community Action**

**Network:** **Dorset Funding Advice Workers**

Amount of Grant: £1,000

Area: Dorset

Purpose of Network: To support funding advice workers, to enable them to network, and share good practice.

Purpose of Grant: To launch the network and to use for start up costs.

**Name of network:** **Gloucestershire Faith Strategy Group**

Amount of Grant: £1,000

Area: Gloucestershire

Purpose of Network: The Faith Strategy Group aims to provide a voice for faith communities to influence the planning and delivery of Services in Gloucestershire.

Purpose of the grant: To enable the network to undertake facilitation, information sharing and good practice. They also wish to Co-ordinate engagement with the public sector.

