

JOINING FORCES TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE IN HOUNSLOW

A report into how the London Borough of Hounslow can leverage local SMEs to provide or support opportunities for young people or the organisations that work with them.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Brief

This report outlines proposals made by fellows from Year Here for how the London Borough of Hounslow can leverage the work of Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to provide or support opportunities for young people. The question we were asked was: how can local government leverage the work of SMEs in providing or supporting opportunities for young people in the borough?

It became clear during the course of this 8 week project that looking into how Hounslow Council could work with SMEs and Voluntary, Community and Social enterprise (VCSEs) in the borough would be more beneficial than searching for examples of how other local authorities have done it.

As such, this report focuses on finding out what SMEs and VCSEs would need from the council in order to provide or support opportunities for young people, and proposes solutions based on that information.

Research Outputs

The research, interviews and workshop uncovered the concerns and barriers of SMEs and VCSEs. These were common for all stakeholders looking to provide or support opportunities for young people:

- All stakeholder groups were unsure what opportunities and potential partners were available locally and how to go about finding them
- All stakeholders wanted more guidance on how to work together to support or provide opportunities for young people
- SMEs in particular said there were too few incentives for them to initiate partnerships

Overleaf is a summary of the outputs delivered in this report.

Proposals

Based on the research conducted and the first hand experience of looking into partnerships for the Hub Cafe on the Meadows Estate, this report presents three main proposals:

- The London Borough of Hounslow should help collate and distribute local opportunities for support and provision
- The London Borough of Hounslow should provide non-monetary incentives to SMEs and VCSEs to provide or support opportunities
- The London Borough of Hounslow should provide new resources to help SMEs and VCSEs provide or support opportunities

Final Thoughts

These suggestions and recommendations are largely informational. They assume that if the information and advice were available, it would help encourage SMEs to provide or support opportunities in partnership with VCSEs and local government.

However, the information is only part of the puzzle, which would include incentives and rewards, communications campaigns, partnerships and an emphasis on Placed Based Giving and Asset Based Community Development.

The challenge the council faces is systemic in nature and specific tactical solutions should not distract from the delivery of a broader strategy.

Deliverable	Description	Delivered in this report
Best Practice Scan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar initiatives and models • Examples of how local authorities have worked with social enterprises in innovative, low-cost ways. • Potential resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two examples of good practice outside of Hounslow • Two examples of good practice from within Hounslow • Overview of what resources from the Council could be used • Summary of SME perspective • Summary of VCSE perspective
Business Engagement Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A community event to understand the needs, perspectives and ambitions of local businesses in relation to supporting local young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joining Forces To Help Young People Workshop (15/09/17)
Case Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A written case study about how local businesses are involved in the Hub Cafe • Recommendations to help the Council facilitate collaboration with the SMEs in future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case study of the process of forming partnerships for the Hub Cafe • Proposals to the Council on what it can do to help SMEs provide or support opportunities

*There are ~12,250 SMEs in the borough,
that's 99.4% of all the businesses.*



CONTEXT

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its relation to SMEs is the main focus of this report, especially the support SMEs could offer VCSEs to achieve economic and social aims for young people.

The current understanding of CSR is a business approach that contributes to sustainable development by delivering economic, social and environmental benefits for all stakeholders. We have found that CSR can be split into two different types:

Formal: a business that has dedicated resources (people, money...) to plan and execute strategies that deliver clearly defined beneficial economic, social or environmental aims.

Informal: a business that engages in CSR on an ad hoc basis with no plans or strategies in place. They do not have dedicated resources to achieve economic, social or environmental aims.

CSR is a term that is synonymous with large, resource rich corporate companies such as Microsoft, Google and Hounslow based SKY, delivering large scale projects. We consistently see great work being done by such companies both at home and abroad.

SMEs across Hounslow, London and the United Kingdom are not always recognised for the incredible CSR work they are doing daily, this can mainly be attributed to the label and perception of CSR.

Types of SME Support and Provision

In this section we look to provide more of a broader definition as to what constitutes CSR and how SMEs can find CSR more accessible.

There are various provisions and support businesses can offer which are identified as CSR. This is important to do as it adds the frame to which this report is written and delivered. We have identified 6 different types of

support and provisions that a business can offer in both formal and informal CSR.

Cash

The donation of cash is by far the most popular form of support offered by businesses. It is a way that many VCSEs are able to provide the services they deliver due to these donations.

Products: Resources With Specific Use

The donation of products from a company's stock or the purchasing of goods or equipment with the specific purpose to be used by the community. E.g raffle prizes

Surplus Materials

The surplus material or waste of a company can be of particular use. This does not necessarily mean that the waste or surplus is produced during the production but could be for example old office furniture or other equipment.

Facilities

Businesses can offer the use of their premises for meetings, events or other such activities.

Professional Time Spent To Provide Advice and Services

SME employers and owners can volunteer their time in a professional way to help provide advice or services to the community. For example, a local marketing agency volunteer an employee for one day to help design leaflets for their local scout group.

Non-Professional Time Donated To External Organisation

An employee volunteers their time to an activity or group which is not in a professional capacity.

Types of VCSE Support and Provision

Through our initial research we found that the relationship between SMEs and VCSEs is not one-sided. Though it is not immediately apparent, even to those VCSEs that we had contact with, they have

something to offer to businesses that offer their support. We have found 6 different types of offering that we believe VCSEs can offer to businesses in return.

Good PR

Businesses are always looking for opportunities to promote their work. They have the chance to differentiate themselves.

Recruitment Channel

VCSEs, especially those that work with young people have great access to individuals that can provide an opportunity for the business to recruit a young person.

New Customers

By supporting a VCSE there is an opportunity for the business to gain new customers. This is especially true if it is a local VCSE and a local business as the community will recognise their support to and could potentially lead to new customers.

Diversity and Inclusivity

By a business working to support a VCSE, a lot of whom work with disadvantaged groups, It gives the business to a diverse group of individuals of which gives them the opportunity to develop an understanding of their local community

Learning

This is an offering for when a business can learn new process and procedures from a VCSE, who are known to be resourceful in their operations.

Culture

Engaging with a VCSE can have the effect of introducing a new culture of community engagement and charity to a business. This could be in the form of overall business practice e.g. dedicated volunteering days for staff.



Types of support and provision an SME can provide.



What VCSEs have to offer SMEs.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

SME Analysis

Contextual Data

- There are 12,250 SMEs in the borough¹
- 99.4% of all businesses in the borough are SMEs¹
- The main sectors SMEs operate in are:
 - Distribution, hotels & restaurants (38%)²
 - Banking, finance & insurance (26%)²
 - Transport and communication (14%)²
 - Manufacturing (12%)²
- There are an estimated 20 SMEs for every VCSE in the borough¹
- In 2016/17 Hounslow businesses took on 1,210 apprentices, of that only 320 were aged 19-24, down nearly 30% from 450 in 2015/16.³

Key Networks

We have identified the main sector network organisations in the borough. These are:

Hounslow Chamber of Commerce

The chamber looks to provide support to all businesses in the borough. They do this through networking events, marketing advice as well as new opportunities for their members. They have great links to local government and also the wider sector.

Brentford Chamber of Commerce

They provide support and advice to the businesses of East Hounslow, with members having the opportunity to network regularly. With members such as Spark! London and University of West London, it can provide good access to SMEs and other important contacts.

Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)

This is a major national body of SMEs in the United Kingdom, they have a West London Body as well as a Hounslow Chapter. As a lobbying group in local government, they provide financial support and advice, and hold events for their members. It seems that they are looking for new ways to get involved with Hounslow and its local government. The FSB can provide sector wide advice on SME engagement.

SME Attitudes To Support And Provision

The SMEs interviewed for this report were for the most part enthusiastic and open to the idea of providing or supporting opportunities for young people.

Once they were made aware of the variety of possible partnerships available to them, they were interested in exploring them further.

In the workshop, they demonstrated a willingness to collaborate across sectors and work with a variety of stakeholders, such as VCSEs, the council, and young people.

SMEs were clear that there needed to be a proportional return on their investment of time, otherwise they would find it hard to justify the time it takes to form a partnership.

Identified Barriers

- SMEs are not fully aware of the benefits that partnerships could bring them.
- SMEs are pushed for time and money, so forming partnerships to provide or support opportunities for young people is not currently a priority.
- SMEs do not know how to find out about VCSEs or young people in their local area if they are not already part of networks.
- Most of the SMEs interviewed did not feel knowledgeable enough to start providing or supporting opportunities.
- Some SMEs suggested that, though they do not need monetary incentives, they would appreciate non-monetary incentives.

VCSE Analysis

Contextual Data

- ~600 VCSEs in Borough of Hounslow⁴
- The main areas which these VCSEs work in are:
 - Health & wellbeing (61.7%)
 - Community development (46.8%)
 - Promoting volunteering (45.7%)



The relationship between SMEs and VCSEs is not one-sided.

Londis, Salisbury Road — ‘Used to offer work experience and donate to the school, stopped[...] due to time commitment’

Chaat Junction, Hounslow Central — ‘I would offer support to young people[...] if I knew how to get started with it.’

Momma’s Kitchen, Hounslow Central — ‘My business is just too small to offer anything useful[...]!’

Center Link Coaching, Hounslow — ‘I could help a young person with coaching, but it needs to be economically viable.’

- Promoting and supporting community cohesion (44%)
- Over 40% of VCSE say that children and young people benefit from their work
- 52% of VCSEs work across the whole borough of Hounslow
- 38% say that they work in partnership with other VCSE organisation to deliver services.

Key Networks

These are the main sector network organisations in the borough that we have identified as being important for this report and its proposals:

Hounslow Community Network (HCN)

HCN is the representative body of the voluntary and community groups in the borough. They look to work together to strengthen the voice of their sector on the issues that affect them and those they look to serve. They have very strong links to their sector and are a great advocate for VCSEs in Hounslow.

Hounslow Voluntary Sector Support Service (HVSSS)

Provides support, advice and information for the VCSEs that operate in the borough. They also

provide fundraising, development and guidance on how to set up a new community group.

Volunteer Hounslow

Facilitates opportunities for the sector in Hounslow by supporting all aspects of volunteering. They do this by helping people register and become volunteers and helping sector organisations involve volunteers in their work.

We believe that Groundwork London, who runs the initiative, with a wealth of knowledge on volunteer engagement, can be a key organisation.

VCSE Attitudes To Support and Provision

- VCSEs are happy to receive support from SMEs and also from the local government. However, there is not a clear idea as to what the motives of businesses is to help them. Businesses are often perceived as sources of philanthropic support.
- They recognise the importance of a two way relationship, however they are unsure about what could be offered to businesses to help incentivise them.
- They are excited at the prospect of not just the

Charity Owner, Feltham — ‘I don’t just want the money or human support but **the building of networks!**’

Community Centre Manager, Isleworth — ‘Local government **should be doing more to support us**, but with cuts I understand it is hard.’

Director of Charity, Hounslow — ‘This is a chance for businesses to **give back to their community**...we can be an avenue.’

skills, money or human support that could be offered, but also connections and having access to networks that SMEs may have access to.

- VCSEs are interested in seeing what impact such partnerships will have on their work and the young people in the borough.
- There was a sense that local government could be doing more to support relationships, which includes the promotion of such activities.

Identified Barriers

- The borough is fragmented in terms of the resources allocated and the information that is available for VCSEs
- It is hard to find information on the support that is on offer, and how to access it
- There is an absence of innovative models for incentivising SME involvement
- There is a perceived lack of capacity to build and support partnerships.

The London Borough of Hounslow Council Analysis

Overview

There are various different council departments that are doing great work across the borough, such as the Community Partnerships Unit (CPU), within the VCSE sector and the Economic Development Team, who work closely with SMEs.

However, we found that due to the structure of the council a lot of the departments work in isolation of each other with not much time for collaborative work. The council has great plans and strategies that are looking to tap into the local assets of communities, businesses and the borough council.

Key Projects And Initiatives

Below are the projects, initiatives and strategies that the council is currently working on and apply directly to this report.

Hounslow Giving

Hounslow Giving is an new initiative that the council has started. It which looks at embedding the Placed

Based Giving (PBG) model. This model aims to bring together multiple stakeholders (businesses, residents and volunteers) to help identify and address local issues. Hounslow Giving will replicate the success of other borough PBG initiatives such as Islington Giving.

Thriving Communities Strategy (2015–19)

The 4 year strategy seeks to develop individual communities across the borough. It has 3 main strategic outcomes; to empower communities, to build up resilience and to develop a sustainable future for communities. Building sustainable communities requires the partnership of VCSEs, SMEs and residents. The strategy highlights the importance of partnerships between different stakeholders in the local community, with a distinct focus on VCSEs.

Hounslow Together’s Vision for 2030

This is a vision that was created in 2011 by Hounslow Together, which is a local strategic partnership. Through consultation of stakeholders it looked at what the borough saw as the future of Hounslow. It saw that people, the place and the economy were the key components in creating a Hounslow that represented the diverse and vibrant community.

ValueYou

ValueYou was awarded start-up funding by the council. It reward those who volunteer within the borough with incentives such as discounts at around 350 London businesses. It has the potential to be a great draw for volunteers and has great potential in the future especially with the current council strategies.

Young People Analysis

The 8 weeks of the project ran over the end of the school holidays. That meant that during the research and interview phase of the project access to young people in local schools was impossible, and many families were on holiday or otherwise unavailable for interview.

The young people that were reached were those canvassed around the Meadows Estate and those that attended the workshop from the Hounslow Youth

Council. In general, they were highly motivated and focused.

The young people interviewed felt disconnected from their local SMEs. This is unfortunate because young people are likely to have skills that SMEs, and indeed VCSEs, could use such as marketing or technological knowledge.

To reach engaged young people is relatively simple: contact organisations like Spark! London or Hounslow Youth Council, or speak to the local head teacher. What is far harder is reaching young people that aren't already involved in such organisations.

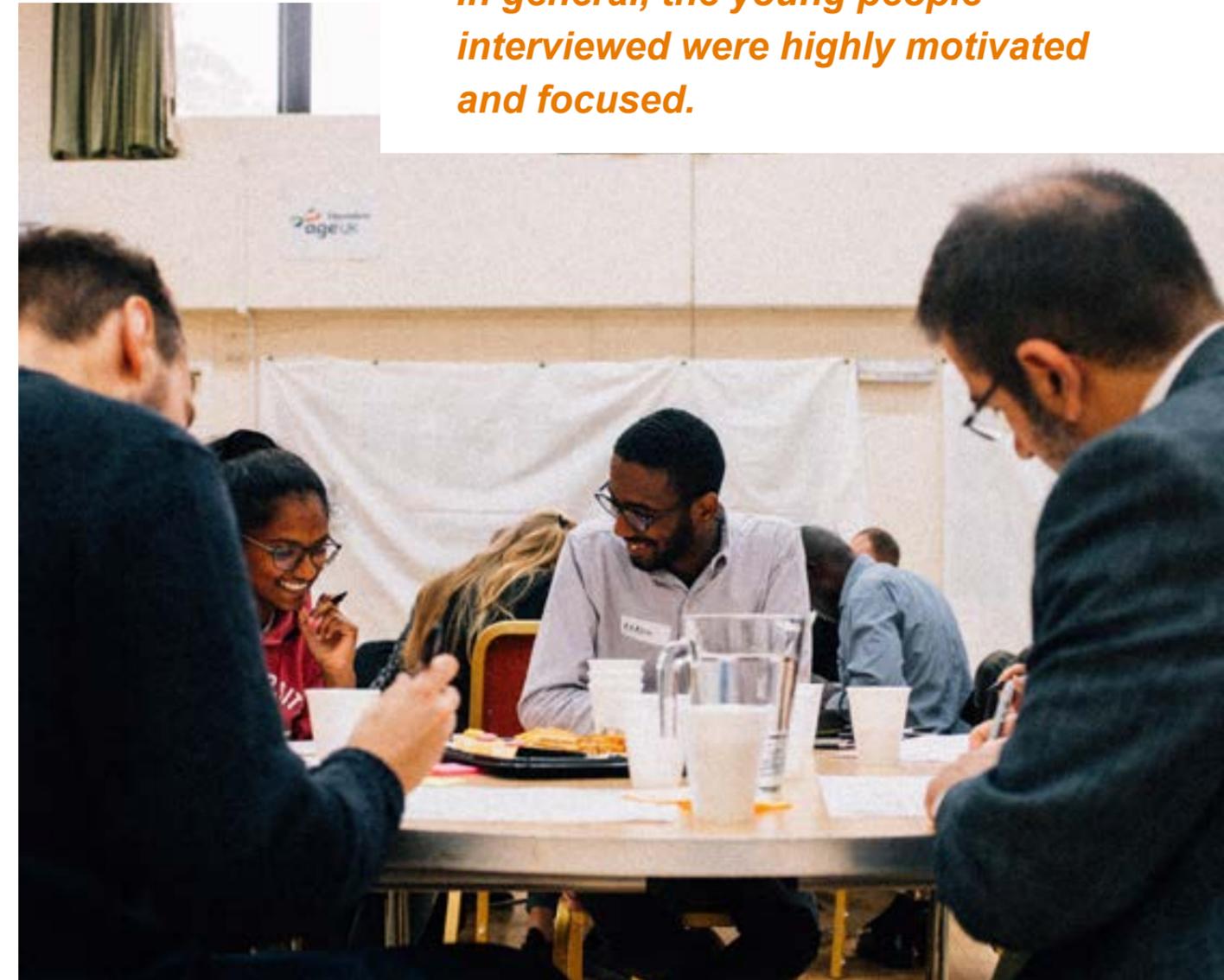
A longer engagement period would be required to reach this group and start addressing their specific concerns.

Hounslow Youth Council — 'Young people have **tech skills that companies need!**'

Local young person — 'Companies need to try to reach us where we are, **we don't read noticeboards or local newspapers.**'

Local young person — '**Being part of the Youth Council has been essential** to me learning about my career opportunities.'

In general, the young people interviewed were highly motivated and focused.



Analysis Summary

Throughout our research and the interviews that were conducted and highlighted in the previous section we saw various barriers for our stakeholders. However, we identified three main barriers that were constantly being faced by VCSEs and SMEs and that we consider to be the ones that we look to address in this report.

Stakeholders unsure what's on offer locally and how to find out.

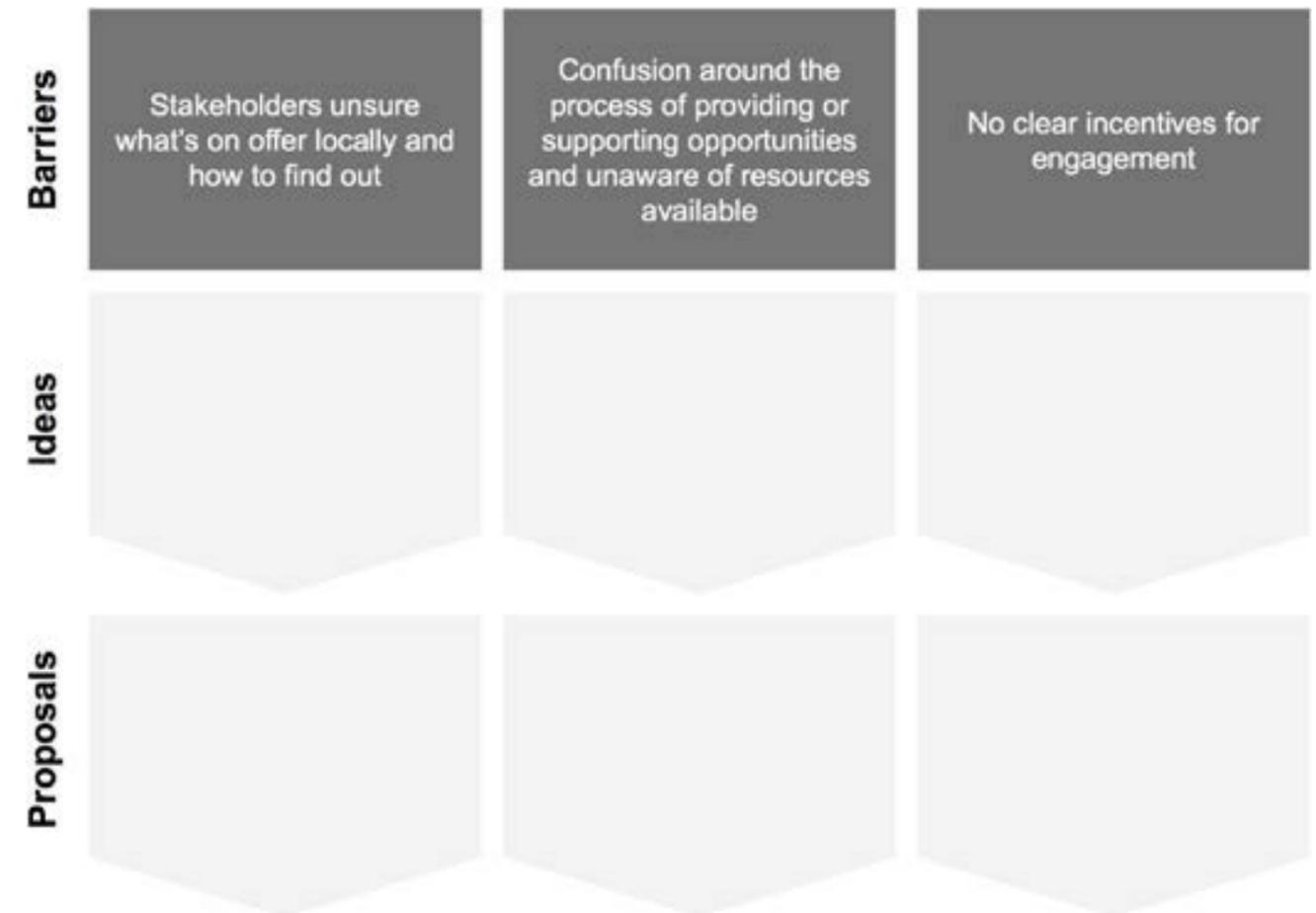
This was highlighted early on during our own research into offerings in the local area and also from conversations with local businesses and interviews with VCSEs. There was great uncertainty about what support was needed by VCSEs and how to find out.

Confusion around the process of providing or supporting opportunities and unaware of resources available.

The confusion of processes in how to provide support and where that information can be found was brought up throughout the entirety of our research. Many including the SME sector organisation the Federation of Small Businesses made a point that this was a deterrent for many small businesses. As local government has not got a clear and concise process in which SMES can lend support.

No clear incentives for engagement

From both SMEs and VCSEs there was a worry that there were not clear incentives for SMEs to get involved and support VCSEs. As we are looking at how to leverage the support of SMEs for the VCSE organisations that provide services to young people, we feel this is a vital barrier that needs to be addressed.



The barriers identified in research.

CASE STUDIES

There are many examples across the United Kingdom of SMES and VCSEs doing great work to provide or support opportunities in their communities. The organisations detailed below have found interesting ways to create partnerships and support their local communities or other organisations. They are examples of what is possible.

Inside Hounslow

Spark! London

Spark! London, started out as the Hounslow Education Business Partnership and after 35 years it changed its name to Spark London and with that formed a new charity. They bridge the gap between businesses and schools. They have done great work, with their activities impacting some 8,000 young people a year.

How does the partnership work?

Spark acts as a broker between educational establishments and businesses. It has key partners such as GSK & Thames Water, as well as schools and community partners who support their work.

Why does the partnership work?

Providing access to young people and the skills that they offer is important for businesses and can give them a pipeline of talent that they can tap into. This is especially the case when the students are in schools as they have not yet decided on the paths that they would like to take.

Spark gives the businesses an avenue into their local communities. Giving them the chance to interact and to engage more people in the local community. It is a way for them to give back.

The Bridgelink Centre

The Bridgelink Centre is a community centre located on the Ivybridge estate in Isleworth that was given to the local community to run 15 years ago. They run support sessions and events for the community. Their work has been credited with reducing isolation, building skills and encouraging integration.

How does the partnership work?

The centre allows for community groups to use the rooms and event spaces that they have on offer. They also allow for local businesses and organisations to use the space. It is a very clever way of ensuring the sustainability of the centre through a robin hood model, by using businesses to finance and subsidise the services on offer to the community.

Why does the partnership work?

The support and partnerships work because Bridgelink is proactive in identifying the needs of their centre and the community to ensure that they have what they need to continue their work. Local businesses are getting great rates to access the facilities that are on offer, in addition, some are given great access to new customers. Their partners in the community are gaining the space and a centre that is being supported by local businesses through carefully crafted offering.

Outside Hounslow

Assael Architecture's 'Giving Something Back' Programme

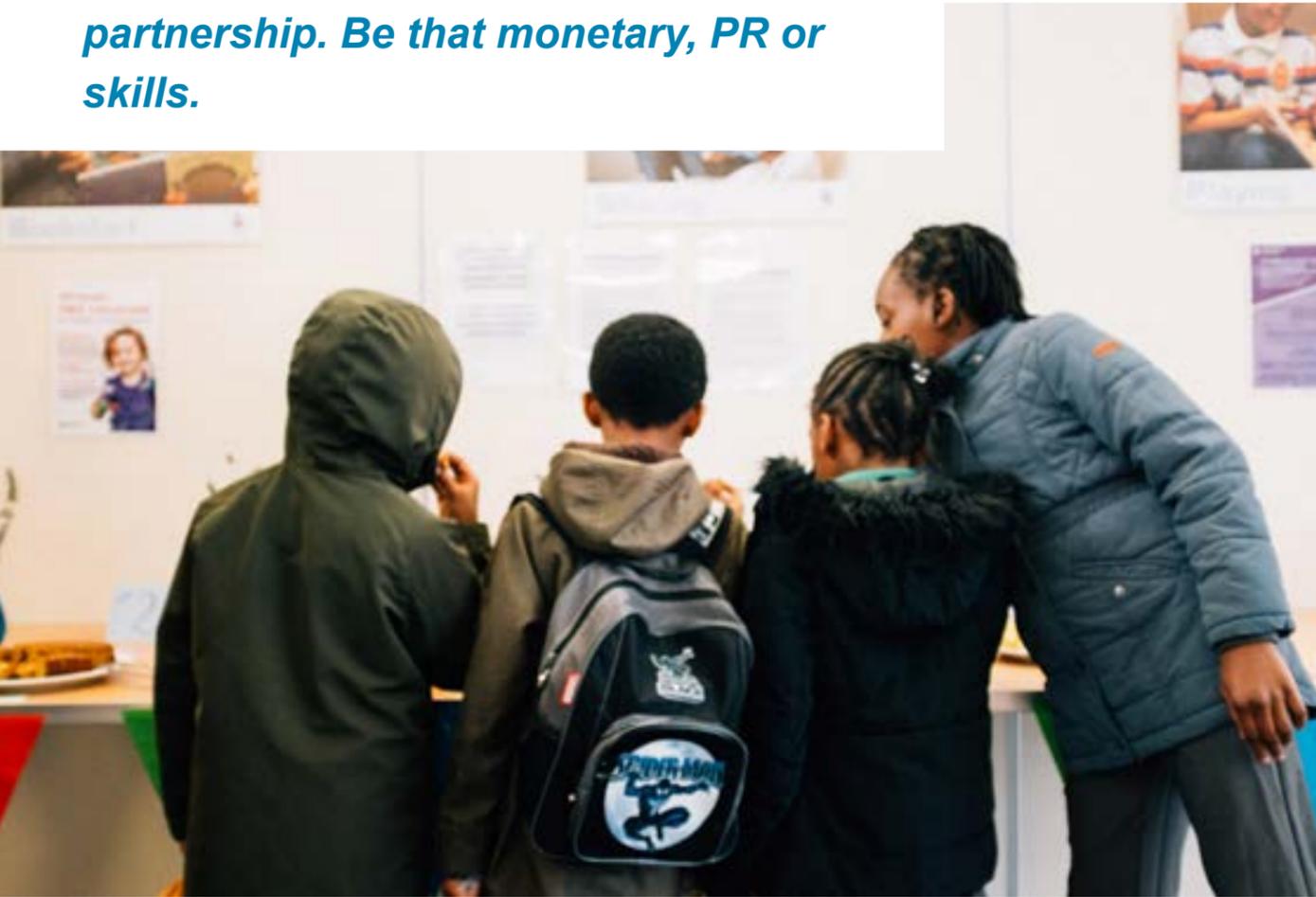
Assael is a London-based architecture firm who were recipients of the Dragon Awards for SME Community Engagement. The 'Giving Something Back' programme was launched by the company in 2013. This initiative allows the company to find ways to build further relationships with their community. Their target is to donate 1% of turnover to charitable causes and for each of their 75 staff members to spend at least one working day a year volunteering.

How does the partnership work?

The company has partnered with Paul's Cancer Support Centre providing them with pro-bono advice, they have helped revive a derelict playground, supported young people through employability workshops, and have developed a long-term partnership with local charity, Fulham Good Neighbours.



There must be a win-win in the partnership. Be that monetary, PR or skills.



Over the lifetime of the programme, they have supported 295 young people with construction sector careers advice and reduced isolation for 28 elderly and vulnerable individuals. 95% of staff participate, and they have calculated that they have donated 1,560 hours to community initiatives, which they value at £135,720.

Why does the partnership work?

The reason that this programme works is because it is using the professional skill of the company and its employees. Allowing them the opportunity to try their hand at new problems faced by a different clientele. It also gives them the opportunity to grow their presence in the local community which allows for good PR for their company.

This programme focuses their partnerships and resources to be spread over a number of different social issues that are faced by the community. The VCSEs are gaining valuable information and skills from professionals that they would not normally get access to. This again is of great benefit for both parties.

Digital Youth Academy (DYA)

The DYA was started in 2011 by Penny Powers OBE to engage and give young people the opportunity to contribute more to the economy and society through the use of their skills. The DYA looks to use the digitally aware youth to help teach SMEs digital skills and social media awareness.

How does the partnership work?

DYA has developed partnerships between educational establishments and local SMEs to provide training to young people who can gain valuable work experience by offering their services to local SMEs. They currently

have 14 partners working alongside them and are looking at having at least 500 young people take the qualification and gain work experience.

Why does the partnership work?

The premise of this project is very interesting as it allows a neutral place for where businesses can partner to offer opportunities to young people.

They are not directly training the individuals but merely giving them a work opportunity. The benefit to them is that they gain a member of staff with the digital skills that are often lacking in SMEs. It also looks at providing the right level of support and guides SMEs through the process of offering support.

Summary of Findings

- There must be a win-win in the partnership. Be that monetary, PR or skills.
- Recognition and promotion of the activities of the SMEs is an effective incentive (Good PR).
- A clear framework for partnerships that maximises the benefit and outcome for both parties and the beneficiaries.
- Tapping into passions and expertise is an easy way to engage an SME. It allows for limited training time and the benefit to the VCSE is maximised.
- In looking at support offered there needs to be a level of trust in the process from both parties. It is important to understand how the resources (human resources, cash, etc...) will be used, and that it is used as intended.
- A element of brokerage is key to make sure that organisations and SMEs can find each other.

WORKED EXAMPLE: THE HUB CAFE

This section includes our own experience and processes we went through in trying to find support and provisions for a community group and social enterprise. We used the The Hub Cafe on the Meadows Estate in the Cranford Ward.

It was chosen due to a team from our organisation working on a project for Cranford Stronger Together (CST). Their project was to explore the viability of a sustainable community cafe in the Hub Community Centre. We will look at the steps we took and our key learnings from our experience of working to build a network of support from local businesses and organisations.

Context

The Meadows Estate, which is situated in the Cranford Ward, is home to over 1300 residents. Cranford is one of the most deprived wards in London with 33% of its residents claiming a key benefit, compared with the London average of 15%. The CST programme was introduced to seek ways in which the Council can improve social outcomes and in turn maximise the community's potential.

The Brief

The brief was to work with the people of the Meadows estate to develop and put forward recommendations for a sustainable community cafe that works with local businesses to provide opportunities for social connection, employability skills development and community engagement.

Introduction to the Cafe Vision

The Cafe has gone through a 2 month co-design process that has included trial testing, extensive community engagement and business model design. With this in mind the team highlighted that there were several barriers that they wanted to address:

- Lack of access to neutral third spaces
- Low levels of community engagement
- Poor knowledge of services and stigma accessing them
- Lack of skills, social and workplace confidence
- Lack of support leading to low confidence

To address the barriers they identified they looked to design a cafe with specific features in order to produce positive outcomes for the community. The main features were:

- Community led events
- Informal signposting to services
- Volunteers gaining qualifications
- Coaching and support for volunteers

The Cafe will be fully operational within a year with around 20-25 running the cafe. The Cafe has a lot of potential and a community that needs investment in assets that they can own, develop and ultimately be proud of. We looked at ways that local businesses and organisations can assist in its development and support the community.

Our Approach

While both projects were being delivered we planned out our approach to how we envisioned this report could gain actionable information without disrupting the work the Cafe team. We recognised early on that the cafe is not a community group that has a direct focus on young people but more for the community at large. So we decided to look at their work as what most VCSE groups including those that have a focus on youth would have to go through.

The approach we took was twofold. The first three weeks we looked at:

- What was the natural process for them to go through in looking for partnerships?
- Did they identify barriers that came up in our initial best practice research?
- How were these barriers dealt with?

Then, during the next three weeks, we took on a more active role within the cafe team, helping to design and implement different structures and identify partners, which coincided with our interviews and the Joining forces event. This period allowed us to:

- Test our ideas and findings with the cafe team
- Experience first hand the process which many VCSEs go through in finding support





Key Processes

The two most important processes in involving SMEs in the Hub Cafe were identifying potential partnerships and creating a value proposition for the cafe. They were decided upon based upon our best practice research, interviews and the Joining Forces Event.

Identifying Partnerships

When we moved into a more active role we decided to first look at identifying partnerships and what support we might need. Following the best practice research and the interviews that were conducted it was clear that some VCSEs do not properly identify the right partnerships according to the needs of their organisation.

As a team we needed to first look at what we already had and what we were missing. This would allow us to deliver the outputs and outcomes desired for the cafe. It was decided that we would look at both support and provisions that were both critical and noncritical (nice to haves) for the cafe. We identified the following:

- Things that could add value to our volunteer scheme (providing incentives for recruitment and retention, etc...)
- Upskilling opportunities for volunteers
- Supplies (food, drink, etc...)
- Marketing support and advice (design skills, printing, advertisement, etc...)
- Recruitment channel for volunteers
- Furniture

There were various businesses and organisations that were contacted after we identified our needs. These varied between SME, VCSEs and larger businesses. This is a list of some of the local businesses and organisations we contacted:

- Cooking with Monisha (Upskilling Volunteers)
- Optimal Human Movement (Add value to volunteer scheme)
- Vista (Marketing)
- Salisbury Cafe (Supplies, Marketing)
- Strawberry Local (Marketing)
- Londis (Marketing)

- MoD Cavalry barracks (Recruitment Channel)
- Hestia (Recruitment Channel)
- KC furniture (Furniture)

Outcomes

The responses to our requests were varied. Some were very interested in taking part in a community project, such as the Salisbury Cafe. Some, despite being in the local area, did not want lend the support that we were looking for. This could be because they did not have the capacity to fulfil the request or that they did not see that it fitted in their wider business remit to the community.

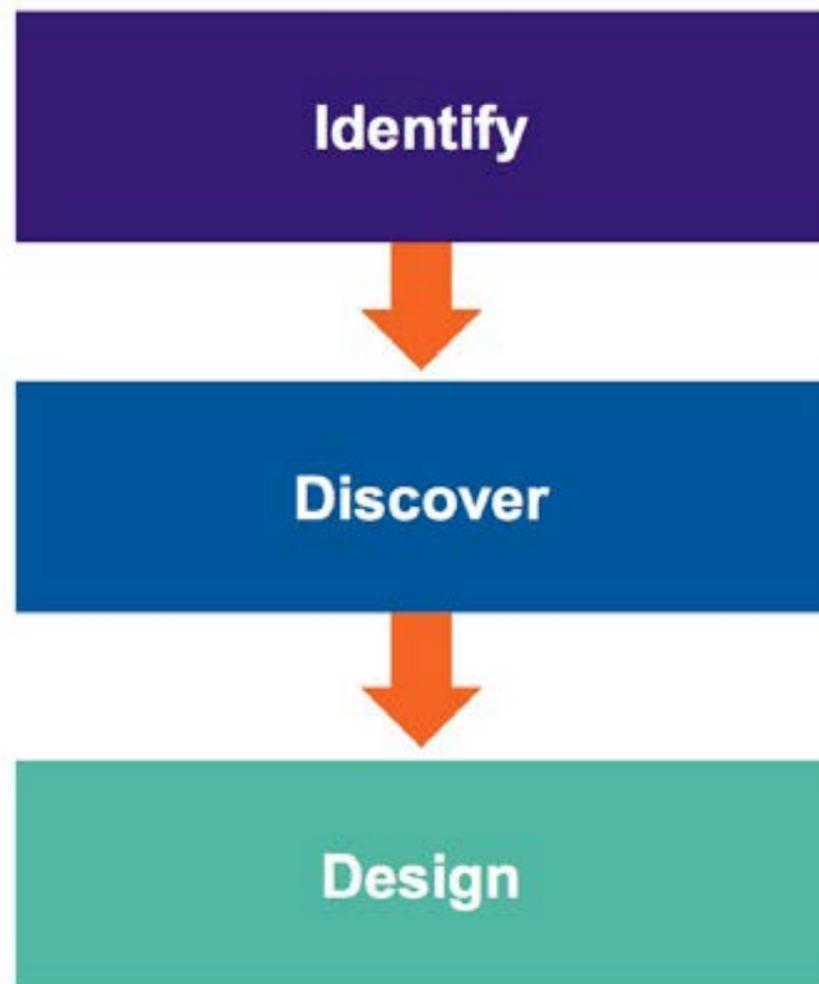
In some cases we were directed to an organisation that was able to lend the support that was needed. An example of this was when we initially approached IKEA for furniture. They were unable to help but forwarded us on to KC Furniture. KC Furniture are a VCSE who provide community groups with furniture. They were happy to help support us. This taught us that some businesses have networks that offer the support they cannot offer directly.

Value Proposition

This was a separate process we went through to identify the value the cafe has that could attract potential partners who could offer support.

It was decided that this process would be useful after the *Joining Forces* Event and our interviews with SMEs, especially the Federation of Small Businesses. The FSB highlighted the relationships between VCSEs and SMEs must be mutually beneficial.

After having experience in creating our own value proposition for the business features of the cafe, we explored what value the cafe had which could be offered to SMEs. The steps are listed below.



Step One: Identify

These questions looked at what makes up the cafe and its challenges.

- What does the cafe do well? E.g. service to the community, training of volunteers, Impact of work.
- What are the barriers it faces? E.g. limited resources, inexperience of staff in management.
- What are the specific needs of the cafe? E.g. marketing advice, volunteers.

Step Two: Discover

We used our best practice research to identify what the cafe could offer to businesses.

- What local businesses could gain from supporting the cafe? E.g. Good PR, inclusivity and diversity.

Step Three: Design

- What could be created to make our approach to businesses easier? E.g email template, tool kit.

One Page Offer Summary

As a result we looked into different ways in which we could present the information of the value proposition. We decided that a one page document that outlines the offering and support required is the easiest way to relay all the important and relevant information. This would allow a potential business partner to understand the needs, wants and gains of the support that is being requested. The document should highlight:

- Brief summary of what you do
- Impact of your work
- Your specific needs identified
- Barriers you face and how that partner could help
- What they will gain from supporting your work.

Going through the process of creating a value proposition can provide clarity as to what you seek. It also allows potential partners to have a clear knowledge of your work and your specific needs. This will make it simpler to identify the needs of your organisation and what support they can offer.

Summary of Findings

- The creation of a value proposition is a good way to identify what makes your organisation or community group attractive and what you could offer potential partners.
- A one page document that can be used to send out to businesses would highlight what you do and the key facts of your impact.
- It is very hard to know what is out there and who is able to provide support. You would need to be part of a good network to get the information or contacts needed. We were lucky due to the support and contacts of the council as well as being from an established organisation.
- Without the proper guidelines or tools making the approach is daunting and the hit rate can be low.
- Not all local businesses buy into the community CSR work and that they can sometimes see such organisations as a nuisance. This is especially the case if there is no clear benefit for them or a specific and targeted need that you are looking for them to help you fix.

Things To Consider

Time Constraints And Scope

Due to the nature of this project, we had only a brief time to explore and to practically go through the steps of identifying and approaching partners. As many of these partnerships are still to be confirmed and agreements of support reached. It is now a decision of the borough council to action the recommendations made for the cafe, and then the cafe management to pursue these partnerships.

Future Application

We believe that there is an avenue to start testing and designing a framework for the one page document. This could be used with a few test VCSEs and SMEs to see how they would use it and if any improvements should be made. It could be added to the community tool kit or as a resource for the Hounslow Voluntary Sector Support Service to give to its members.



PROPOSALS

Collate and distribute local opportunities

In the workshop and when canvassing on the streets, one of the ideas that came up repeatedly was: a single point of access for support and provision. It could be a simple website where SMEs could list their capacity and capabilities and VCSEs could list their requirements and what they could offer in return.

The website would act as a hub between sectors. It would be a database of organisations who want to provide or support opportunities for young people and each other. Moreover, citizens that want to volunteer with, get experience with, or work for these organisations would find information there about how to get involved. Isolated young people would be signposted there by their support networks, schools, and the council.

This recommendation partly address the concerns from all parties that there is too little information available for them to kick partnerships off. Young people, unless they are involved in the Hounslow Youth Council (HYC), were out of the reach to the SMEs interviewed for this report. The VCSEs that support young people are disconnected from the businesses that could help them. Some VCSEs are even suspicious of the motives of SMEs in assisting them.

The workshop demonstrated that there are SMEs ready and able to assist, and VCSE organisations ready to partner up with them. Connecting these sectors through a London Borough of Hounslow (LBH) sanctioned service would remove this barrier for already motivated parties.

Examples

Volunteering Hounslow

As the accredited volunteering service for the borough, Volunteering Hounslow is a good place to start with any of the proposals listed here. In terms of collating and distributing local opportunities, Volunteering Hounslow does a lot and could do more. It is powered by a service called VCCconnect, which

provides the database facility for the website.

Good practice: With council backing already agreed, it is perfectly positioned for further development of its offer. It already contains listings of organisations that want volunteers, has a network of volunteers who may be staff in SMEs, and offers recognition in form of certificates. It also appears to be partnered with ValueYou to offer volunteers further incentives by way of discounts in local shops.

Areas for improvement: Unfortunately it does not yet cater to SMEs that want to offer skilled volunteering or other kinds of support or provision. A service designed to answer this brief would act as a hub for all opportunities. Moreover, the rewards and recognition it offers are only for individuals or volunteer involving organisations.

Team London

Powered by a service provider called Do-It.org, Team London is the Mayor of London's initiative to get more people into volunteering. It provides a space for organisation to post opportunities to the general public. It is designed to get individuals into volunteering easily.

Good practice: It allows for specificity in the type of opportunity being sought by individuals, so volunteers can follow their interests (e.g., mentoring, sports, health, etc...). Opportunities can also be listed by borough to make searching locally simpler. Moreover, it has the kudos of being run by the Mayor of London's office.

Areas for improvement: Unfortunately it does not yet cater to SMEs who want to offer their skilled volunteering or other kinds of support or provision. A service designed to answer this brief would act as a hub for all opportunities.

Non-Monetary Incentives

FairTrade is a globally recognised brand that drives consumer choices. Businesses proudly display its mark on their products and websites. The same is true of the Living Wage Foundation and the Which? Trusted Traders marks. In the workshop, many

participants suggested a similar scheme for civil society involvement would motivate them offer their time and skills to VCSEs.

Such a scheme could serve a few purposes. Firstly, it could help drive consumer behaviour to shop with SMEs that are actively working to improve the local area. Secondly, it could create a community of likeminded SMEs. Thirdly, it would be a quick way for young people to identify SMEs they could approach for volunteering opportunities and work experience. Finally, it could be a useful promotional channel for SMEs who perhaps struggle with differentiation. The Chambers of Commerce could be the engine of this promotion.

Like the Living Wage Foundation, this scheme should be as easy as possible to join. It could involve offering up a minimum number of hours of skilled volunteering a year to VCSEs. It could neatly be combined with the online platform described above. The terms of the scheme's commitments could be negotiated by all parties.

For individual volunteers there is a scheme already running in Hounslow called ValueYou. It provides discounts for citizens that volunteer in their local community. Moreover, Volunteering Hounslow certificates both volunteers and 'volunteer involving organisations' by the number of hours they have volunteered or number of projects they have volunteered on. Neither of these attends to SMEs providing or supporting opportunities, which is a gap that could be filled by partnership with these two organisations.

Provide Informational Resources

Of the organisations interviewed, few said they lacked the motivation to support or provide opportunities for young people. What they lacked was the knowledge to see them through the process of either partnering up to accomplish their goals together or helping a young person directly. There is an opportunity for the council to provide guidance as it has a strong network of relationships to draw on for best practice insights.

The first option to achieve this proposal is to design and publish one or more toolkits addressing SME and VCSE partnerships for the public good. These new toolkits could be modelled on the Community Tool Kit already produced by the council. Ideally these toolkits would contain:

- Advice on approaching a potential partner
- How to make use of your own network
- Typical things different kinds of organisations can help support or provide
- What help the council can offer as a broker
- Inspiration for the different kinds of partnerships
- Advice on how to ensure a win-win partnership
- Links to further services and organisations that could offer support
- Brief case studies, or photos of previous examples
- Checklists of key actions to take at different stages

Final Thoughts

These suggestions and recommendations are largely informational, and assume that if the information and advice were available it would help broker relationships. This may be true, but it must be said that information is only part of the puzzle, which would include incentives and rewards, communications campaigns, partnerships and probably an emphasis on Asset Based Community Development and Place Based Giving. The challenge the council faces is systemic in nature and particular tactical solutions should not distract from the broader strategy.



APPENDIX

Glossary of Terms

SME

The usual definition of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) is any business with fewer than 250 employees. There were 5.2 million SMEs in the UK in 2014, which was over 99% of all business.

VCSE

VCSE organisations include small local community and voluntary groups, registered charities both large and small, foundations, trusts and the growing number of social enterprises and co-operatives. These are often also referred to as third sector organisations or civil society organisations.

CSR

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a business approach that contributes to sustainable development by delivering economic, social and environmental benefits for all stakeholders. CSR is a concept with many definitions and practices.

Joining Forces Event Debrief

Why The Event Was Held

Part of the project brief was to understand what the London Borough of Hounslow could do to help support partnerships between local SMEs and VCSEs to the benefit of young people. After many phone calls and meetings with members of each stakeholder group it became clear that such a siloed approach was not sufficient. These groups needed to meet to share their ideas and overcome the barriers to partnering together.

How The Event Was Structured

To maximise outputs from the event, a workshop with three main exercises and two supplementary activities was designed. The agenda for the workshop ran thus:

- Advice to your younger self. This introductory activity was designed to take participants back to their younger selves and make it easier for them to imagine solutions for young people.
- 'How might we...' questions. This exercise had participants see past current limitations of budget or station to what solutions to their issues could be. The question is posed this way because 'How' implies there are possibilities, 'might' implies it

can be done, and 'we' implies collaboration.

- Persona challenges. Based on first hand research in Hounslow three personas were created: Ryan, Joanne, and the Chaudhary's. The first represented a typical young person, the second a senior charity director, the third a small local enterprise. Participants were challenged to imagine support they, their organisation, and someone in their network could offer these personas.
- Commitments. Once the participants reached the edges of their problem solving imaginations, they were asked to commit to actions at set time intervals: in one week, in December, in the new year.

This structure meant that participants were carefully guided through different perspectives, from the specific through to the general. Each exercise was designed specially for the event. All the exercises and materials used are in the appendix.

Areas for Improvement

Overall the event was a success. Feedback has been positive, and some participants said they already had partnerships in mind for one another. However, in the planning and in the choice of participants, a more careful approach would be taken.

Give sufficient notice. The goal was to assemble key members of each stakeholder group. It succeeded by and large, but the two weeks' notice given to participants led to frustration. Some had to rearrange their schedules to accommodate the event, others expressed their disappointment at not being able to attend due to other engagements.

Future workshop organisers should endeavour to give more than two weeks notice to participants to ensure attendance of key stakeholders. Moreover, calendar invites should be sent to have a guest list that participants can respond to easily and quickly.

A clear stakeholder map makes attendance planning much easier. If the event can only accommodate a limited number of participants it risks alienating important groups. Having a clear idea of priority participants going in, and being able to wait for them to reply to the invitation, would help keep controversy away from the workshop. Without this, the workshop might not be representative of the stakeholders it purports to be, undermining its legitimacy.

With more time between the initial announcement to the workshop's scheduled date, future organisers could ensure that all stakeholders are accounted for. This also stand for the organiser's own stakeholders

who might need to sign off any content included in the workshop.

Face to face meetings are very important. The highlight of the event was watching people who had never met before collaborate to solve problems together. The importance of getting people into the same room cannot be overstated as it allows any confusion or misconception to be solved right there and then. It allows for first hand information to be shared and common ground to be found.

Methodology

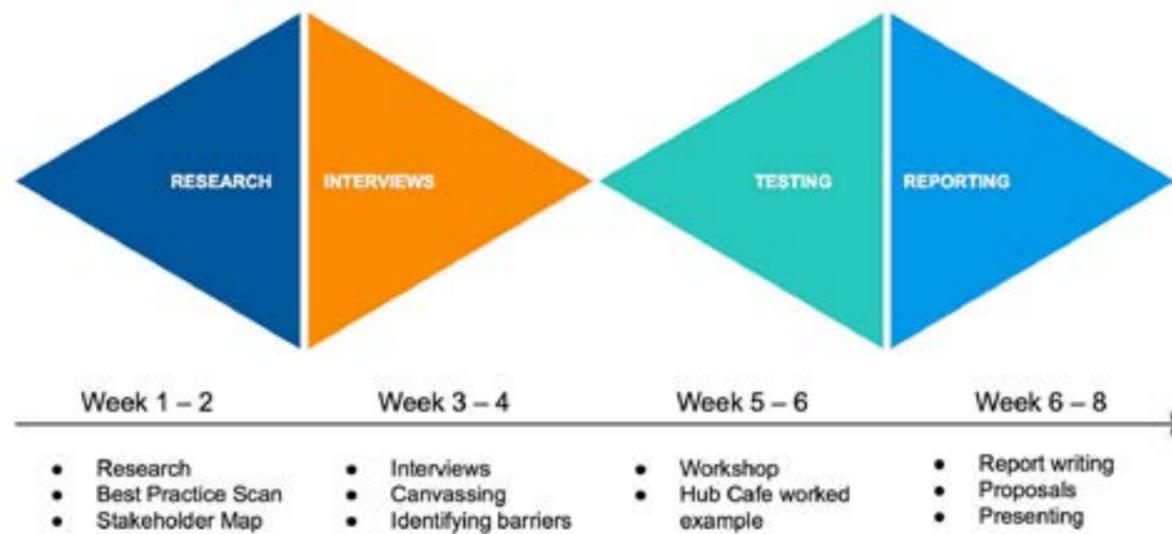
The eight week project was structured as a 'double diamond.' This is a project management framework which allows for broad research and focused analysis to occur at several points in the project.

The report started with a careful analysis of the brief, to ensure a complete understanding of what the London Borough of Hounslow had briefed. Once that was established, research into the many organisations working in Hounslow began. During this phase, the stakeholders in the project from the SME, VCSE, and local government sectors were mapped out.

Once the initial research was complete, weeks

3–4 focused on a few organisations to interview and canvass in specific areas. This was to deepen the understanding of the reality on the ground, and identify the barriers that SMEs and VCSEs in Hounslow face. Sector specific events were attended and relationships built with local sector bodies like the Hounslow Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses.

In weeks 5–6 we sought to test the initial research. A workshop was held (see appendix) and the Hub Cafe in the Meadow's Estate developed. This broadened out the scope of the project again as the implications of the initial research had to be considered with the results of the workshop.



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This project was undertaken by Year Here Fellows on behalf of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel Task & Finish Group in the London Borough of Hounslow.

Year Here is a full-time post-graduate course in social innovation based in London, designed to cultivate entrepreneurial approaches to entrenched social issues.

