

Economic Justice programme case studies

Case study 1

The Birmingham Anchor Institution Network: £103,000 over two years to the [Centre for Local Economic Studies](#) (CLES) to establish a network of large institutions to work together to implement principles of [Community Wealth Building](#) in Birmingham. There are currently seven institutions in the network: the NHS Hospital Trust, two housing associations, two Universities, West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and Birmingham Council. Our grant funded a network coordinator who worked with each institution to identify its priorities within the Community Wealth Building framework; and how separately and together the network members could contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of their local communities.

Why did we fund it?: Anchor institutions are one of the mainstays of the local economy. They employ a lot of people, they have large premises and their services reach every corner of the community. The Community Wealth Building framework provides a way of ensuring that economic benefits stay local. We wanted to test the idea that by working together across different sectors, institutions could have more impact than they could by working alone. We intended this project to benefit people in Birmingham, but also to show other areas of the country how big organisations could work differently together for the benefit of the local community they exist to serve.

Impact: By helping each network member consider their strategies through the model of Community Wealth Building, they better able to individually and collectively improve economic, social and environmental outcomes for local people. The network has developed examples of good practice, such as a pilot recruitment programme that will match people from one of the most deprived areas of the city to job opportunities they might not have considered. A procurement project has ensured that local social enterprises are included in supply chains. The network has used its collective weight as employers of more than 50,000 people to influence conversations at a city-wide level on the Real Living Wage and employment pathways for young people and has produced a joint COVID-19 recovery plan. The benefits of anchor institution networks working together are so clear that all the Councils in the Black Country area are now setting up their own anchor networks.

Links to our priorities: Inclusive economies; increasing social justice outcomes; working across different sectors; Birmingham focus with potential for national influence

Case study 2

Birmingham Poverty Truth Commission: £42,200 over three years to [Thrive Together Birmingham](#) for its [Poverty Truth Commission](#) (PTC) . The idea behind the Poverty Truth Commissions started in Scotland, bringing together two distinct groups of people: business, civic, political and faith leaders and an equal number of people who struggle against poverty on a daily basis. They jointly focus on building relationships; encouraging change within the organisations, institutions and communities that the commissioners come from; and making policy proposals around key areas of anti-poverty work identified through the experience and knowledge of the commissioners with lived experience. Birmingham PTC provided a safe space for people with first-hand experience of poverty to share their stories and to meet people in positions of influence in the city, as equals. The unique approach

supports people on both sides of the power divide to explore their personal journeys, find connection and together work for policy and practice change.

Why did we fund it? The Trust believes that people intended to benefit from public policy and practice need to have a hand in shaping it. We were drawn to the idea that people with experience of deep poverty, and those with responsibility for budgets and services could meet as equals, learn from each other and together shape change. The approach had been tried in Scotland and Leeds and we wanted to see if it could benefit Birmingham.

Impact: The PTC has had a significant impact in the city. The commissioners worked on specific policy areas and achieved change but perhaps their biggest impact was to demonstrate to Birmingham City Council the value of learning, in depth rather than through superficial conversations, from people with lived experience. This has led to senior leaders in the Council wishing to have a different type of conversation with local people. The Council has built this into its structure: in 2020 it tendered for a three-year Truth Commission, which was won by Thrive Together Birmingham and the PTC. Their first area of consideration will be Housing.

Links to our priorities: People with lived experience influencing policy; working across boundaries; innovative approach; Birmingham

Case study 3

Shifting the Balance of Community Power: £16,375 to [New Local](#) as a contribution to its research on how councils and communities worked together during the COVID crisis. Through interviews, workshops, and in-depth case studies, New Local examined new practices and partnerships that emerged in the first Covid-19 lockdown. In its report it set out a series of proposals for national governments; local public services; voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector organisations and communities to embed and build upon the new approach in future, beyond the immediate demands of the crisis.

Why did we fund it? The COVID crisis is like nothing else we've seen in our lifetimes and forced everyone to respond at pace and in new ways. We were keen to capture some of the positive changes and new relationships: to help use the hard-won learning from a very difficult time to "build back better".

Impact: At this point (March 2020) it is too early to tell. The report was published and shared widely. It has been very well received with New Local reporting that it received the highest engagement of any research report it has produced. But the work does not end with the publication of a report and we will stay in touch with New Local as they continue to advocate for the learning to be embedded in practice.

Links to our priorities: Learning from the pandemic to change relationship between sectors. National influence.