

# Fair Share Northern Ireland

Final Report  
Written by Margo Horsley and Peter Grant, April 2009



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**fair  
share**

Lottery money where it's needed most



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## FOREWORD

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The focus on making a real difference at local level and on engaging local people more effectively in the grant-making process presented a challenge to the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland. The invitation from the Community Foundation Network and the Fair Share Trust to CFNI to undertake a different approach to model a different approach to delivering funding came at a time when the Community Foundation was reviewing its grant-making approaches and how these could be more empowering and more effective in promoting positive change at neighbourhood level. CFNI set up a regional Fair Share Panel with members drawn from community, statutory and voluntary sectors. While CFNI had involved beneficiaries in grant advisory panels previously the approach of beginning at community level to identify needs / opportunities and working with local organisations and key stakeholders to make most effective use of the Fair Share funding and complement other initiatives was something new. Following research on the 48 wards spread through 14 council districts a process of consultation and facilitated planning was initiated. What transpired in this learning by doing project was a consensus or 'consensual' (to reflect CFNI's role to ensure inclusion of the marginalised / unrepresented) model of grant-making. Learning gleaned from the ongoing external evaluation enabled the adaptation of the model over the period to enhance the impact of the funding. The leadership provided by the Fair Share Panel and in turn by the local steering groups ensured that ownership of the consensus approach was collective and not restricted to the Community Foundation.

The Fair Share model of consensual grant-making invites funders to work more collaboratively with local communities and key stakeholders to make a greater and more sustainable difference on the ground.

*The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland is an independent grant making organisation committed to tackling social exclusion, poverty and social injustice through funding and supporting community based action and influencing policy.*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**Margo Horsley** has developed and applied a strategic planning model for grant makers which can be applied to all forms of grantmaking. The model allows grantmakers to become more operationally effective, allowing them to focus on policy development and evaluation of their work. This work underpins the Grantmanagement Programme at CASS Business School where she continues to be a visiting lecturer. Her focus is on people and access rather than groups and functions, which has led her to some interesting insights into the work of grantmakers. She also works in the voluntary sector on organisational development and project development and delivery on large and small scale, as well as providing training across a range of areas including capacity building, monitoring and evaluation. She has prepared bids for Lottery funding and managed funds received from Lottery

and a range of other funders. Margo was one of the five-strong first phase team that set up the National Lottery Charities Board and she has worked with the Lottery Sports Fund, New Opportunities Fund, UnLtd (grantmaker working with Lottery Funds), Futurebuilders England and cross-distributor projects. She has also established a number of major charitable foundations. She is a skilled TV and radio researcher, producer and director; her programmes and work have been broadcast on independent radio and ITV. Margo created and delivers ITV Fixers [www.itvfixers.com](http://www.itvfixers.com) in England.

**Peter Grant** is acknowledged as one of the UK's leading practitioners in public and charitable funding. After working in the arts he was Director of an inner-city youth charity for eight years. On the commencement of the National Lottery he moved to Sport England where he devised the first Lottery programme to favour areas of deprivation and was one of the architects of Awards for All. As Director of Operations at the New Opportunities Fund between 1999 and 2005 he developed and delivered over £4.5 billion of funding programmes. These included the Peoples Network to provide broadband connectivity to all UK public libraries, a £750 million project to upgrade sports facilities in UK schools and Hero's Return for World War Two veterans. He then developed the world's first full masters-level programme in grantmaking and philanthropy at Cass Business School where he is academic leader of the Philanthropy and Grantmaking Management and Governance programmes. He has published papers on these topics and presented to conferences in the UK, Europe and the USA on grantmaking and curriculum development. His Cass Masters programme received the university prize for curriculum development in 2006. He is Director of Ulley Consultants whose clients include government departments, NDPBs, major local authorities and charitable foundations. Recent work has included developing proposals for the involvement of charities and public bodies in the London 2012 Olympics; improving the processes for operation of parole processes in England and Wales and developing proposals for the funding for alleviating problem gambling in the UK.

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## INTRODUCTION

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### **Does consensus grantmaking work?**

Our conclusion last year was that the consensus model opens up new areas of development for grantmakers, especially those wanting to reach people in the most deprived communities in the UK. We have no reason to amend this view.

There are many grantmakers who encourage their applicants to engage with users in the creation, development and implementation of their projects. The benefits of community development work are also well known, not least in deprived areas. Fair Share in Northern Ireland encouraged this approach amongst its applicants. But it goes one step further; it has sought to involve users in the creation and development of the programme itself, and then in the implementation as applications are put together and submitted for funding. Staff have taken on a community development role with organisations to allow this to happen.

The positive feedback, consistent across the three Fair Share Areas and in the two online surveys, suggests that this is an important development in grantmaking.

Consensus Grantmaking involves 'hard to reach', community-led groups in a new way that gives them real decision-making powers and a stake in the programme. It seems to us that this is a new model of grantmaking that requires careful consideration by other funders, both private foundations and, perhaps more importantly, governmental and quasi-governmental ones.

However, as we suggested in our last report, it is not without its issues for grantmakers. With the passage of another year we can be rather more definite in answering some of these.

- How far should staff be engaging in community development work? At what point does this become so intensive that the funder becomes the deliverer of the work?
- Would community development work be as effective if done under contract to the grantmaker or as a grant to another local organisation? We believe that another year has partially answered this point. It seems inconceivable that without the knowledge and, more importantly, the 'neutrality' of CFNI the programme could have been as effective. Only if the funder were able to identify a delivery partner with these attributes would the use of an intermediary have been equally successful.

- If we involve applicants in the process of grantmaking how do we ensure fair treatment of all applicants? There was one negative comment that CFNI did 'favour' a particular applicant. Such accusations are inevitable in any funding process but the degree of involvement of the funder with this programme means that any errors of judgement become exaggerated in their impact.
- How can the funder further strengthen the mandate of local steering groups without compromising accountability? Is there, indeed, a danger that the steering groups themselves could become a new 'elite' organisation and lose touch with their communities. There are no obvious signs of this happening with Fair Share but if the steering groups were to operate in the longer term it is a danger that would need careful monitoring.
- What are the implications for sustainability of the work funded and its impact? We now have some more indicators and these are, as stated above, cautiously optimistic. To gain a real view on longer-term impact and sustainability would require a further evaluation further down the track in, say, three to five years.
- Is such a programme affordable? Inevitably delivery costs of such an intensive programme are high and one or two groups made it clear that some form of management fee to lead partners would have improved and strengthened delivery. This is inevitable with a programme so embedded in community development and the strengthening of social capital. Just like projects, grant programmes do not have fixed overhead costs, and to deliver real impact in deprived communities with weak voluntary infrastructures means that overheads will be far higher than for other types of grantmaking. This fact needs repetition to both funder organisations and government.

In Northern Ireland the Community Foundation made a huge investment in this programme which goes well beyond the remuneration from the Community Foundation Network for delivering the Fair Share Trust Programme. The most deprived communities in Northern Ireland have voiced, in their own words, that something has changed and something new is happening.

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## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

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There were six evaluation questions for us to address:

### **1 Are the aims of Fair Share being achieved?**

In the published material for Fair Share, in our view, there are two aims and two objectives. The objectives are operational in that they talk about building capacity and social capital; the aims refer to the overall purpose of the programme and talk about enhancing liveability and improving the environment.

Our feedback would lead us to conclude that building capacity can be clearly demonstrated and that there are positive signs that this could lead to a strengthening of social capital.

### **2 What factors influenced the effectiveness of Fair Share?**

We believe that a further year has cemented the view that the greatest influences on the effectiveness of the programme are: the skills and experience of staff; and the fact that CFNI are viewed as an “honest broker”.

The commitment and resolve of local groups and people to ensure that local needs are met irrespective of the benefit to their particular group has been paramount. The approach has clear social justice connotations, in that work in one area will benefit everyone. For example, working with young people to reduce crime and fear in a local area will have a long lasting impact on everyone in the community and local services.

Conflicts within local communities in Northern Ireland range from rivalry amongst voluntary organisation to sectarian to political. The people’s will to build new relationships for the future of their communities and the Community Foundation’s resolve to harness that good will seems to sit at the heart of this programme’s success.

Last year we expressed our main concern for the programme, as it moved into its last phase. This is that the level of support could be maintained and that what had been learned through this experience was used to plan the future. This year we can report that there are signs that momentum has been maintained and that positive results are being sustained.

### **3 Has the Consensus Model helped?**

The Community Foundation created this model of engagement with local communities in response to a range of factors but, in

particular, recognition that the traditional model of competitive grant making wasn't working for the most deprived communities.

The consensus model is resource intensive as an approach but it addresses needs at a local level. It engages people in a process. It gives them a sense of ownership which provides a building block for a range of activity. It addresses the need for local groups and agencies to work together for the good of the community despite their differences. It requires an agreement about what is and isn't needed and what the priorities should be. It builds relationships at all levels, locally and with funders.

Setting up a steering group doesn't come without risks. How do you ensure that groups are not excluded from participation in the steering group when it relies upon participation, usually self selecting? In some areas the grants team did need to put pressure on groups to participate - because without them community credibility would be reduced. Constant review of the makeup of the steering groups would seem a necessity.

#### **4 Is the 'Outcomes' approach helpful for local communities?**

This programme is talked about as an "outcomes-led" programme. In our view the programme publishes aims and objectives rather than a set of outcomes. However the focus on three target groups combined with targeting disadvantaged communities has probably achieved the same end.

The concentration on three target groups has provided flexibility for communities and they have been able to negotiate a funding package which is meaningful to them. Programme aims and implied outcomes are broad enough to accommodate this. It may be that the concentration on three target groups rather than on aims and outcomes - something tangible and meaningful on the ground - has ensured the chances of success.

The accepted model of outcomes grantmaking requires either that the funder sets outcomes and applicants are expected to demonstrate how they would be achieved or, more democratically, requests that applicants set their own outcomes with indications of performance indicators to demonstrate achievement.

The problem with both approaches is that they demand that applicants have an understanding of outcomes and how to measure them. Though many funders provide helpful guides about how to do this many, especially smaller, community-based groups, find this rigor in project planning extremely difficult. It would appear to us that Fair Share in Northern Ireland has managed to overcome the problems of "applicant interpretation" of outcomes by the process of

funder involvement and community development. By leading the areas and the local projects through the process they are able to demonstrate what their projects are achieving and their impact without involving any of the complexities of jargon or technicalities usually associated with an outcomes-based approach.

## **5 Has CFNI been effective in delivering Fair Share?**

The views of local groups give a resounding “yes” to this question. With the passing of another year it is also clear that CFNI has maintained this effectiveness, a real achievement.

## **6 What is the Potential Policy Impact?**

This remains by far the most challenging question not just for CFNI but for other policy makers too.

- This programme is resource-intensive but it offers a new way of engaging local groups and people in the most deprived areas. How can programmes like this be resourced without being challenged about their administration costs? The best response is to utilise the outcomes of evaluations such as this (and a related one with the “Trust Project” run by the St Katherine’s and Shadwell Community Foundation in London which also sought to raise capacity amongst deprived, local voluntary organisations see <http://www.skst.org/en/1/trustproject.html>) to demonstrate the value of investing adequately in programme support.
- How does this programme relate to the future direction of CFNI? How will the learning from this programme be used to develop future programmes? Can CFNI influence other grantmakers to invest funds through CFNI to deliver more programmes like this one?
- Can the results of this programme with deprived communities be transferred to other programmes where “communities” are defined differently?
- What role does CFNI have in the sustainability of this programme in the short and long term? As an honest broker should it be using its own practice with deprived communities and apply it to the community of funders working in Northern Ireland, seeking to influence their future practice for the benefit of all communities?
- Can CFNI be both a “local funder” as well as a “Northern Ireland-wide funder” and carry out both roles in unison and to good effect?

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Fair Share aims to “make a difference” in deprived communities that had missed out on earlier lottery funding. The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland undertook the delivery of the Fair Share Trust Programme, funded by the Big Lottery Fund and commissioned by the Community Foundation Network, in 49 different areas covering 14 Council Districts throughout Northern Ireland.

Their approach to rolling out Fair Share involved piloting “Consensus Grantmaking” as a way of maximising the impact of the funding and ensuring best practice. Consensual grantmaking means:

- Involving local stakeholders, community organisations and statutory (LSP and Local Authority) in considering the needs of the area
- Inviting “expressions of interest” from local organisations for addressing the needs in a focussed way
- Initiating a process of facilitated discussion and planning to bring forward a “joined up proposal” to address the local needs. This is a very different model from that of the traditional competitive model.

This report is the final one in a series of three. The first report, published in June 2007 mapped the grant making process and recorded the starting point for evaluation, providing context for this study.

The second report considered the consensus model of grantmaking as viewed through the eyes of recipients and local organisations. The final report looks again at these conclusions to consider whether anything has changed over the past year and whether any further conclusions can be drawn.

The second report conducted face to face research with local groups and beneficiaries (nearly 100 participants) across three Fair Share Areas and an online survey. It concluded that consensual grantmaking is a new approach to grantmaking and a welcome one.

Consistency of response from unrelated groups in different areas combined with the strength of feeling about the approach (despite having to address some difficult issues) suggested that this model of grantmaking has a role to play in engaging some of the most hard to reach people and communities throughout the UK.

A further online survey conducted in March 2009 has confirmed these conclusions. As a model consensus grantmaking combines community development work with a series of engagement and user involvement strategies, not only as a requirement for grant holders in the delivery of their projects but also as part of the grant making process itself. It takes good practice from the voluntary sector and applies it to its own business in the planning and delivery of the programme.

This approach has a relevance which goes beyond Northern Ireland. Communities everywhere will continue to have their conflicts; some short-lived and others which go on for years. Without engagement, communication and an honest broker, new relationships cannot start or flourish, change is stifled. In Northern Ireland the Community Foundation has taken on this role as part of its approach to the delivery of the grant programme. The approach would seem to be replicable across the UK in other communities defined by their deprivation. It may be that it also holds an opportunity for communities defined in other ways.

### **Traditional Grantmaking v Consensus Grantmaking**

Traditional models of grantmaking tend to be led by the funders' perceptions of problems, needs and solutions, whereas the consensus model works with the communities during this crucial planning phase to ensure ownership of the grant programme by local stakeholders.

Traditional grant programmes are also characterised by an urgency to spend money to the funders' timetables without ensuring that the communities with whom they are working have the capacity to work at this speed. Consensus grantmaking allows for variations in the speed of delivery to account for individual differences at community level.

By definition the Fair Share programme is situated in some of the most problematic communities in the province. 31 of the original awards were categorised as intended to build "social capital". The concept and measurement of social capital are not ones that have clear and unambiguous definitions, especially when considered in relation to the concept of capacity building.

Some funders have tended to use the terms interchangeably when they are not the same. Very briefly "capacity building" is a process that can take place both within individuals and organisations but it is not an outcome in itself. "Social capital" is a resource that communities can draw on for all kinds of development, but it is not an absolute it is a continuum.

Social capital tends to be measured in terms of the numbers of associational links that individuals have, including their membership of societies, clubs, community organisations and the like. Capacity building should be designed to give individuals the skills and confidence to develop these networks. Both concepts can be considered as part of a wider concept of community development.

As such consensus grantmaking will inevitably have a greater impact on capacity building – skills development – than it can have on the “pool” of social capital in a community – at least during the period of this evaluation study.

## **Findings**

The findings of this third study reinforce those of the previous one in emphasising that Foundation staff have performed the role of community development workers, and that the programme as a whole is concerned with community development. This is not the traditional role of grant programmes which instead fund others to play this role.

This orientation is not without difficulties. One is the extent to which the Foundation staff involve themselves in the funded projects though this does not seem to have caused any significant issues for this programme. The other is the amount of time spent in supporting the programme and here there is no doubt that CFNI have put far more into the programme than they have taken in support fees. At both this level and at individual project level the issue of full cost recovery is one that any future programme of this nature would need to take careful account.

The findings of the online research in March 2009 have not significantly changed from the results obtained 10 months previously. The vast majority of projects reported that local people had learned new skills and that both people and organisations were working more closely together. It was encouraging that there was an increase in the number of projects reporting that:

- more money had been obtained to continue projects (up from 24% to 62%)
- they like being trusted to know what needs there are in their communities
- although the experience had been painful it was worth it!
- they want the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland to use the consensus model with other funding streams.

Overall there were very few negative comments on the programme and these were confined to problems with delays in setting up and with needing more help with the bureaucratic tasks involved.

Unsurprisingly with these comments over 88% have rated the Fair Share programme very good or the best in relation to other funding programmes.

As with the last report the consistency of response is high and does not appear to be significantly influenced by local factors, all parts of Northern Ireland reported very high degrees of satisfaction with the programme and commented positively.

Another positive outcome is that of the projects that have reached the end of their Fair Share funding an encouraging 61.5% have continued with new sources of funding.

## **Conclusions**

In the last report we asked a number of questions:

- Should staff be engaging in community development work?
- Would community development work be as effective if done under contract to the grantmaker or as a grant to another local organisation?
- If we involve applicants in the process of grantmaking how do we ensure fair treatment of all applicants?
- How can we further strengthen the mandate of local steering groups without compromising accountability?
- What are the implications for sustainability of the work funded and its impact?
- Can we afford it?

All of these remain relevant and need to be answered in the longer term. However with regard to the first it would seem essential that for the positive outcomes that have been achieved the grantmaking staff must be involved in community development.

In the last report we were concerned that as the programme moved further into the delivery phase some impetus would be lost, but from those projects surveyed this does not seem to have been the case.

The traditional model of grantmaking wasn't working in many of these communities. As well as the problems identified earlier the traditional model has a tendency towards funding organisations

because of what they are rather than what they can become, Fair Share has reversed this assumption.

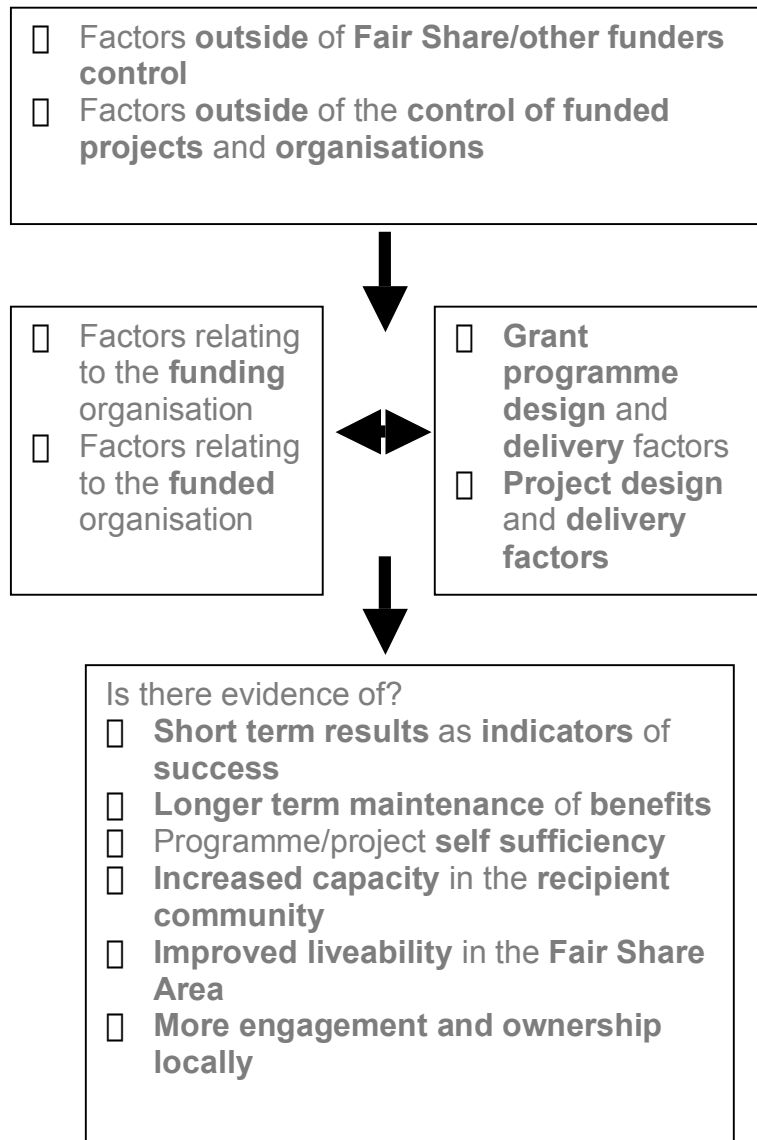
In all of this CFNI is very much seen as an "honest broker" by projects and this "neutrality" has significantly influenced the effectiveness of the programme. Not every funder could play this type of role but it has significant implications in terms of social justice and the evidence is that the programme has had a positive effect in every type of community. This, in turn, will have implications in a post-conflict era and the consensus model has been shown to be one that is about the future of communities rather than their past, development not history.

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## THE EVALUATION STUDY

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The study overall is designed to explore the relationships between internal and external factors affecting the success of the grant programme.



The overall evaluation brief for this study is as follows:

1. Are the aims of Fair Share being achieved?
2. What factors influenced the effectiveness of Fair Share?
3. Has the Consensus Model helped?
4. Is the “Outcomes” approach helpful for local communities?
5. Has CFNI been effective in delivering Fair Share?
6. What is the Potential Policy Impact?

## **Research**

For this final report we again collected qualitative material and then used this as the basis of an online survey. 47 organisations were sent the questionnaire and 25 completed it. Of these 25, only ten were organisations that completed the survey last year. This means that over the two years 40 organisations have responded and the survey is therefore has a very high degree of statistical validity.

The research was set up to demonstrate whether the programme was on track (or not), but more importantly to explore the strength and weaknesses of consensus grantmaking.

Despite having a very significantly different set of respondents the results significantly confirmed those of the first survey undertaken in 2008.

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## PROGRAMME SUMMARY TO DATE

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Fair Share is run by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland on behalf of the Big Lottery Fund. It has been allocated £2.25 million to distribute across 49 electoral wards in 14 of Northern Ireland's District Councils. This is an average of £46,000 per ward. The programme runs for a period of up to 6 years.

Each phase has had a detailed consultation with local people and other stakeholders before a "priorities document" was drawn up. People in each area have been encouraged to come together to determine how the money should be spent in an attempt to get local ownership. In addition local people and stakeholders have had a say in which organisations should apply for the grants and become the "managing agent" on behalf of the community.

In June 2007, of the £2,250,000 allocation, £1,131,616 had been awarded. By May 2008 another £801,379 had been awarded to groups in Phase 4 leaving a balance of £317,005. By December 2009 all the remaining funding, other than £14,500 in Lisbon, had been allocated.

In Appendix 1 you can find some additional details about the current status of the programme. Here is a brief summary:

- Nearly all grants have now been completed though there remain a small number (11) that are not scheduled to complete until summer 2009 and three that will not be completed until 2010.
- The fit of projects with programme purpose, as discussed in the previous reports, is strong. However the programme can still be considered to be "high risk". This is because the groups funded, by their very nature, were likely to be under-resourced and to lack the skills and capacity to implement their projects effectively and efficiently. Slow starts and delays were symptoms of this. These risks were known at the outset but perhaps not sufficiently understood – after all this was a programme that was treading new ground. Given the knowledge that CFNI has gained through the delivery of the programme, any future funding programme that replicated the delivery model would be able to take greater account of these risks and thus might avoid some of the delays and problems, or at least have tried and tested strategies to overcome them.
- Resources employed by the programme have remained static.
- Monitoring information continues to tell us that in general groups are doing what they said they would, but perhaps with a different view of timetable.

- Evaluation studies of completed projects suggest that local groups are being successful in their work and that Fair Share goals are being achieved.

**Ageing Well Roe Valley** brought together five organisations to work together to improve life for senior citizens in the Coolestan Ward, Limavady. They worked together successfully to: identify and train volunteers; encourage activities, outings and group interaction; and target older males and carers. The grant was fairly modest - £15,000 – but the organisations exceeded their targets for training, events and social activities. The wider community was kept fully informed throughout of how funding was being used. And at the end of their monitoring report they said: "We thoroughly enjoyed the project and the partnerships which Fair Share brought about are still thriving."

The **Dungannon West Community Forum** works with a very marginalised community, the majority of whom live in social housing. The project aimed to engage some of the hardest to reach in training courses to improve their employability. The timing of the project was adjusted to accommodate some other funding coming into the area where the funders had inflexible timetables. One potential threat to the project was a feeling among some local people that troublemakers were being rewarded with exciting training courses. The community development worker was able to explain the courses were open to all and turn this negative response into a positive acceptance of the value of the work. The project results have included a decrease in anti-social behaviour in the area. And there is local demand now for more courses.

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## CONSENSUS GRANTMAKING MODEL

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### The approach

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland was well placed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the identified 49 Fair Share areas.

- Some have weak community development infrastructure
- Some were areas that have sought other types of funding rather than Lottery Funds to date
- Some were areas where there is a high level of inter-community tension and conflict (this was more evident in some of the more difficult loyalist housing areas)
- Some were isolated rural areas and towns
- Some had little “social capital” with weak community and voluntary infrastructures – and 31 of the original awards were categorised as being aimed at building social capital. This is notoriously difficult to measure in the short term and thus it may take many years before the full effects of the Fair Share programme can be fully judged.

Some have all of these factors in common.

*In **Belfast**, for example, The Highfield Ward has been at the centre of 30 years of conflict. There is a mix of council and private housing, and no sense of community cohesion. There is little in the way of community activity or volunteering. Despite numerous funding opportunities to meet real needs, money wasn't being sought by local community groups. Grants existed but no one applied for them, so they weren't getting through. The process of community consultation to identify needs and agree a proposal took more than a year. But eventually a project was agreed with the **CAB** tackling a severe debt problem, whilst also providing training and developing a community forum.*

*Meanwhile, a healthy eating and horticulture training project in **Newtownabbey** brought people together in an area with seven sectarian interfaces. In addition it brought together people from different generations. The project has led to new informal social networks and the creation of a new women's group. And there are plans to repeat the whole project with new participants.*

*In **Caw** tensions between different community groups meant that the panel at first had to consider competitive bids from different organisations. Interestingly no award was made. However, after several months the groups came back with a single community playgroup project supported by everyone on the estate.*

*The above examples demonstrate the way in which the process of grant-making brought communities together.*

The Foundation was also well aware of other funding programmes and their results in these areas. The following concerns were raised in considering the plans for this programme:

- Traditional models of grantmaking in situations of divided communities, sectarianism and divisions can encourage further division rather than unison. They seemed to be led by the funder's perceptions of problems and solutions rather than those of the community.
- Competitive grantmaking didn't appear to be facilitating positive change in disadvantaged communities. Urgency to spend money by funders without ensuring that the community had the capacity to work with the programmes could result in money being wasted. Fair Share areas had already been targeted by a number of grant programmes and without the capacity to respond these communities had every right to be frustrated.

Consensus grantmaking sought to ensure ownership of the grant programme by local stakeholders, community and statutory (LSP and Local Authority) organisations and involve them in the shaping and designing of the programme. It established a non-competitive grant programme. Local organisations were invited to tell the Community Foundation what the local needs were (in the context of the three themes) and then move through a process of facilitated discussion and planning to bring forward a "joined up proposal" that the community believed would address the local needs in the most effective way.

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland believes that the essential elements of consensual grantmaking are:

- Grant programme staff with a community development role
- Facilitation skills
- Capacity building of individuals and community groups
- Confidence building of individuals and community groups
- Negotiation skills

- Structured collaborative planning
- Lead in times of 9 to 18 months before projects start
- Buy in of all stakeholders
- Community-led projects for funding
- Involvement of disadvantaged people who have missed out on other funding opportunities
- A “local knowledge” based Panel that recommends grant awards to the Community Foundation

In the next section we explore the views of grant holders and beneficiaries in relation to the model of grantmaking used to implement the Fair Share Trust programme in Northern Ireland.

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## FINDINGS

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### **Consensus grantmaking related to Programme Planning**

In carrying out this research it has been important to understand the framework in which consensus grantmaking sits. For a successful grants programme you need to establish a structure of outcomes, aims and objectives focused on achieving the purpose of the programme.

If, through your research during the programme development phase, you conclude that some approaches to project delivery are likely to improve impact then you might also indicate to applicants that you are more likely to fund applications which propose, for example, user involvement in the creation, development and delivery of the project or community development activity as a means to building the capacity of the organisation with a view to future sustainability of outcomes.

This programme has, in our view, used engagement and community development strategies in the creation and delivery of the programme locally. The programme has a set of aims and objectives established by the Community Foundation Network which form part of the local agency agreement (with Community Foundation for Northern Ireland).

Budget is another given within this local agency agreement. The local agency agreement did not determine local implementation of the grants programme but set out a broad plan; local agents formed a local panel and involved them in setting local priorities (focusing broad aims and objectives into more relevant and tangible goals locally). Once priorities were agreed the local agent moved on to deliver their grants programme.

In Northern Ireland there appeared to be a second level of priority setting which was agreed with the "local" panel for Northern Ireland. The Community Foundation engaged with local groups and people in Fair Share Areas to enable them to assess local needs and then to determine which needs should be met first. They did this by establishing local steering groups in each Fair Share Area.

To achieve this, Foundation staff performed the role of community development workers in bringing together people, communities and organisations. They engaged local groups and people by working hard to encourage participation in local roadshows to publicise the

programme and then went on to offer user involvement in the creation of the programme locally.

Where local relationships were complex they brought in a specialist facilitator to enable dialogue. Though we would agree that this role was essentially one of community development we see it as being somewhat different to the traditional definition of how community development works. In the “traditional” model engagement takes place mainly at an individual level. For a grantmaker such individual engagement, though ideal, simply would not be possible. Instead engagement with communities was essentially through organisations with those organisations in turn engaging with individuals. It therefore seems to us that CFNI has moved community development through grantmaking onto a new level that has rarely, if at all, been achieved before in the UK.

The Northern Ireland panel (set up especially for this programme) operated in an advisory role, using their expertise and local knowledge to provide an accountability structure for the programme. Staff and local people together actively encouraged the development of applications at grass roots levels. All applications that went to panel were recommended for funding (although they may have been deferred for further work). The strength of the match with programme purpose is clear; however the ability of the groups to deliver the projects was the great unknown.

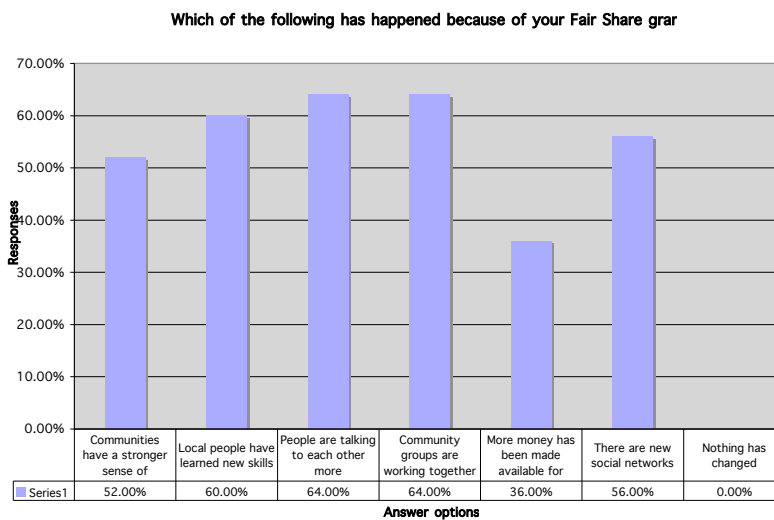
## **What local groups and people said about Fair Share**

Our second tranche of on line research with 25 Fair Share grantholders again resulted in some interesting feedback.

In relation to the published aims of the Fair Share Trust Programme to:

1. Build capacity & sustainability in local communities
2. Build social capital
3. Improve environment, *and to*
4. Enhance liveability

There are even stronger indicators that these things are happening. It is important to note that points 1 and 2 are objectives which relate directly to project delivery, whereas points 3 and 4 are aims. The implication is that by demonstrating points 1 and 2 we should see changes in the environment and people feeling better about how and where they live.



64% of respondents said that people are talking to each other more and that community groups are working together more.

In the answers to this question we get a strong sense of capacity and social capital building; all respondents acknowledge that change is happening:

*"The Fairshare Funding allowed us to grow and seek funding from other sources"*

*"Fairshare is a household name in our Community"*

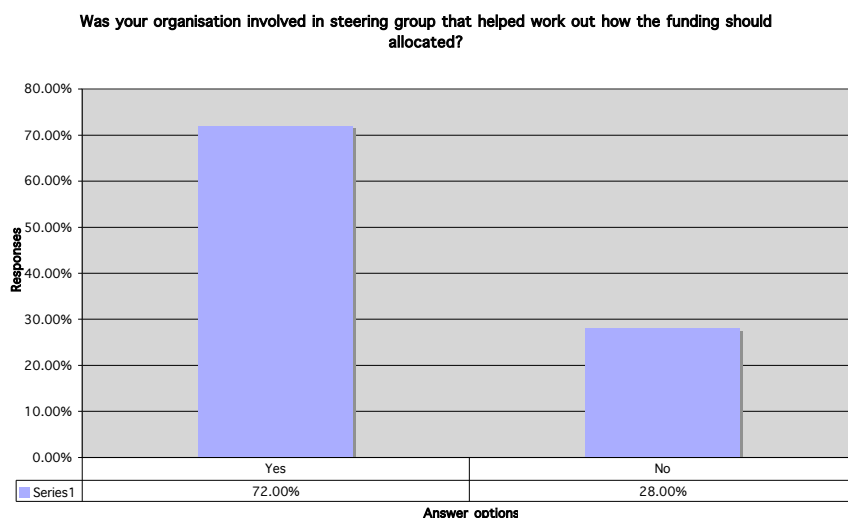
*"Other groups now see the Youth Forum as something worth investing in and the community safety programme has grown from strength to strength."*

*"Better relationships [have been created] between young people and older people"*

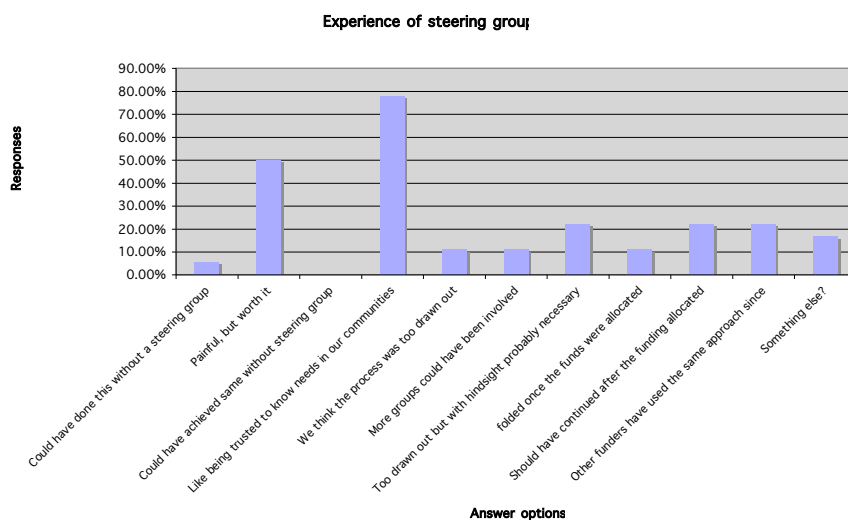
*"[We are] Able to accommodate more people of different ages."*

*"Because of the success of our Project we hope that more money will be available for the continuation of our work"*

The local steering groups have a pivotal role in this grants programme. This is shown clearly in the answer to our second question, with 72% of respondents saying their organisation was involved in the steering group.



Question three sought to qualify their involvement in the steering group and get to grips with its strengths and weaknesses.



This question was answered by the 18 people who had experienced the steering group.

The strongest response was “We like being trusted to know what needs there are in our communities”; 78% of respondents who were part of a local steering group agreed with this statement. Only one respondent thought that the same results could have been achieved without the steering group and, despite the delays, only two thought it was too drawn out.

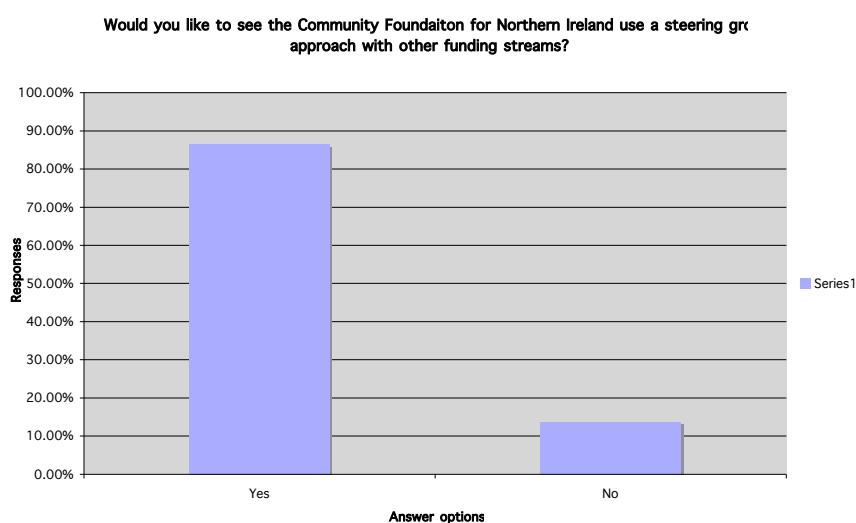
In the “something else” category, statements made tend to further confirm the success of the local steering groups:

*"The steering group has continued since the funding - non formally."*

*"Our steering group will continue after the funds are spent as we have applied for further funding as a partnership!"*

*"The Fair Share programme was right for the groups who benefitted at the time."*

Question four leaves us in no doubt that this approach is liked by those who participated, 87% were positive.



When some unallocated funding was identified for the **Churchland, Ballysally and Crossglebe** area, those who had been involved in a Fair Share project in Coleraine met to come up with proposals. They identified a gap in detached youth work, and felt that the model developed in Coleraine was effective and should be repeated. However, they recommended a different lead organisation for this project – **Focus on Family in Ballysally**. This demonstrates the constructive way in which groups have worked together to ensure money is targeted at the right projects and organisations, and the effectiveness of involving community groups in a transparent grant-making process.

Question five asked what the most positive thing was about their Fair Share grant and the responses were wide-ranging but worth quoting at length as they really give a flavour of just how different the Fair Share programme "felt" to recipients. The key issues coming out in the comments are:

- That entirely new groups are getting funded for the first time
- That many new partnerships and networks are being established
- That new links between groups are being forged within communities, often groups who were wary or even hostile to each other in the past such as young people and older people.
- That all this has been achieved within a grant process that is seen as non-bureaucratic and empowering

*"We were able to support groups which had not got any previous funding from any source and we were able to provide programmes which were exclusively new in Clonard"*

*"We have now in place a cleaner/caretaker to work for two years in a Chiropody clinic we have got started for our elderly, and we have now employed a Youth Worker/development co-ordinator. We hope this our first step towards a better society within our wee village for both the elderly and the young, we have a drop in centre ready to open now for the use of both young and old ."*

*"Fair Share provided funding for a portacabin to accommodate a drop in centre in our village. There are 25-35 young people attending this facility once a week. The centre also is being rented out another night per week for music lessons, also attended by young people. Without this funding it would have been impossible for these [things] to take place within our community. The young people are participating more in their community as a result of this."*

*"[We are now] Able to connect with people within the community who otherwise would not have engaged with the group. It was a worthwhile project. Families united and communicated with each other, enjoyed the quality time they shared on the away days. Something they wouldn't have been able to afford to do on their own family budget."*

*"Our older people's groups have made massive steps in programmes training & events they have participated in & have gained a collective voice"*

*"Since Fair Share was brought into our community group it has allowed us to carry out projects and programmes as a pilot to see how they would work. As a result of this the youth programmes are running continuously throughout the year. We have been able to use the progress of the projects with other funders and this has enabled us to take them to the next level. Most of the community groups involved in the original steering group have continued to work together and run programmes together which has been very successful."*

*"I found that we could be more flexible in our approach and be very innovative with our ideas for young people. Fairshare respected the fact that we are the workers who have the face to face knowledge of issues relating to the area. Those involved felt valued."*

*"Through the three year funding we received it allowed us to develop and expand and we have become a limited company and are working toward becoming fully sustainable."*

*"The joy of the young parents who participated in both our parenting programmes and our healthy cooking programmes. They entered into them with such enthusiasm and took away skills that were useful to their family as a whole and added to their own self worth."*

*"Funding has enabled our project to specifically target groups/areas within the Craigavon area to promote mental health/ suicide awareness amongst young people and their key contacts, highlight sources of support and improve the skills of all contacts to better deal/cope with presenting mental health issues in self or other(s) from a preventative point of view."*

*"One of the three community groups involved has started up a youth club and it is going from strength to strength. Training has taken place with volunteers enabling them to carry on their duties [in a] more informed [way]. It has given the youths an opportunity to become active citizens in their communities. It has given an opportunity for the three communities to work together, building up positive relationships."*

*"Seeing representatives of small voluntary groups take ownership of small projects which brought great benefits to their groups. There were minimal admin procedures and we were not burdened down with bureaucracy."*

*"Our senior citizens group has gone from strength to strength and members are more open in coming forward with ideas and suggestions which didn't happen before."*

*"[What was different was] Seeing the projects through from start to finish and being a success"*

*"The young people are getting on with each other and the older generation are less intimidated by the young people"*

*"Involvement with other groups and lasting friendship especially from a cross-community aspect."*

*"We have been able to establish a 10 hole minigolf course in the heart of a deprived community"*

*"The project allowed for direct engagement with young people in the Rosermount and Glen area of the city. This project provided a template for a wider youth intervention project in the area funded by DSD. Importantly the project allowed for the formation of Youth Forums in the area"*

*"The dynamic within Fair Share was the way in which the grant was managed, regarding community need, with flexibility and with sensitivity"*

*"The fact that we were able to bend the funding to needs as opposed to the other way around which was often the case in the past"*

*"The extension of the work undertaken by our employee. The ability to accommodate a greater number of people. Also, [to] be more aware of what is needed in the community. Able to access the vulnerable community members."*

*"A strong partnership developed between statutory, voluntary and community organisations as result of the Fair Share grant. A detached youth project initiated the process of working with young people where they are at (on the streets) and their needs [were] addressed. The work and learning derived from the process will inform youth services in a new way to engage young people who are disengaged from current provision."*

*"The Fair Share Grant enabled the eight community groups in Strabane to work in partnership and adopt co-ordinated approaches. It united the groups in appreciating the benefit of partnership working which benefits their areas."*

*"The young adults got to achieve a new course which gave them credits towards their GCSE's"*

Question six was the obverse. It asked if there was a down-side to the Fair Share programme. The results here were perhaps even more encouraging. The main criticism was one of sustainability and the fact that the funding comes to an end – a criticism of all time-limited funding programmes. Several of the comments still praised the programme, even though they were being asked for the negatives, and many had no criticism at all to make which is extremely rare for any funding programme.

*"Yes, it will run out in June 2010. We are fledgling group who have just got our feet and will need more help to progress."*

*"The fact that there was no time limit suited our group particularly well as we need planning permission which was a drawn out process. But as far as the Fair Share grant there was no downside for our group."*

*"Yes, as funding finished the steering group didn't continue to meet. Group felt isolated, where to go next. Residents wonder why some events programmes haven't continued the following year. They expected and demand more of the group however unwilling to help in the running of the group. A bit of rivalry amongst groups competition set in who did the best."*

*"No - except it has to end!!"*

*"The process was very straightforward but the only downside was the one of the groups involved took extremely long to complete the evaluations and to get receipts and this delayed the payments coming through for everyone else."*

*"It is a very lengthy process and some of the groups involved initially were more interested in buying equipment etc than looking at programmes for with real development potential."*

*"No"*

*"None"*

*"No"*

*"As lead partner in the partnership we are finding that we have the responsibility for calling meetings, finance and general administration of the grant, just because we are the most experienced group. Yet we do not get any money towards this. In future we would be wary of being lead partners as it has placed extra pressure on our volunteers within our group. All meeting of the partnership take place in our centre in Douglas*

*Bridge as the other two communities do not have premises, we are not paid for this."*

*"No it was very well managed"*

*"No, unless you count the endless hours of planning but I think we all felt it was worth it."*

*"No, but further targeted funds should be made available to the most disadvantaged areas"*

*"It ended!"*

*"That it is not being continued"*

*"It is finishing"*

*"The only downside would be it wasn't for a long enough term. Security in employment is vital to undertaking long term courses and studies."*

*"Unfortunately the Fair Share grant was for only two years. The success of our project could be greatly negated should more funding for continuation of our work become unavailable."*

*"Short term funding which is going to be difficult to sustain"*

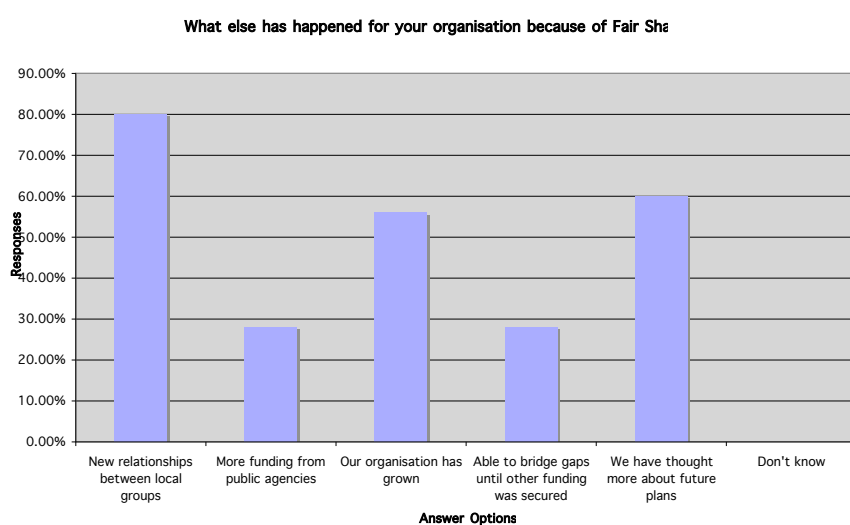
*"No"*

**Cloughfin Community Association** managed the funds for a project that brought together nearly 20 different organisations in a creative intergenerational project. This follows an earlier FST project which brought together groups from across the sectarian divide for the first time. This demonstrates the way in which the programme has brought groups together across many divides to build social capital within the area.

Question eight asked whether their grant had ended. For 15 groups it had whereas for the other 10 it was still ongoing. Questions nine and ten probed what happens when Fair Share funding ends. For those whose grant was still ongoing the majority (six respondents) were still unsure if it would continue. Only two said the project would definitely end. Of the 15 whose funding had already ceased 62% of the projects were continuing with other funding and a further 31% has obtained funding for a modified project.

Only 31% of projects had ceased due to unavailability of funds from alternative sources. This is an encouraging result given the 'high risk' nature of the groups and projects supported by Fair Share. Even in a funding programme with well established organisations a 'non-sustainability' rate over 50% is not unusual.

Question 11 asked about the impact Fair Share had had for their organisation. 80% said that it had created new relationships between local groups; 60% that it had led them to consider longer term planning more carefully and 56% indicated that their organisation had grown as a result.



Among the supporting comments made were the following which all tend to indicate the capacity building element of the programme and, tentatively, that it will have some impact on long-term social capital:

*"I think it helped to improve our reputation - we only came into existence in 2005 so everything we have been able to do programme wise has been very important"*

*"Both Artstraw and Victoria Bridge communities have grown in capacity. In Douglas Bridge we are more established, yet we have had an opportunity to work with neighbouring groups."*

*"We have formed a Community Partnership because of the success of our Fairshare programme with our own office which Margaret Ritchie will officially open on the 13th May 2009"*

*"The Fair Share grant enabled us to secure funding from other agencies with has afforded us the opportunity to enhance and augment our programme"*

Question 12 asked respondents to compare the Fair Share Trust Programme to others that they know. 88% said that it was 'very good' or 'the best', an improvement even on last year's results for this question.

As respondents had now had a fairly lengthy involvement in the programme Question 14 was a new question which asked what aspects of the programme they would like to see changed. Time delays and longer-term funding were the points raised most frequently which is not unsurprising but again even the supposedly negative comments were remarkably upbeat:

*"The programme was a bit frustrating in the beginning with setting up the steering group but this is done now and I believe we are a stronger group because of this challenge. In the beginning of the programme this would of been one thing that I would of changed but I feel now that the whole programme was very positive and has made our group a better one."*

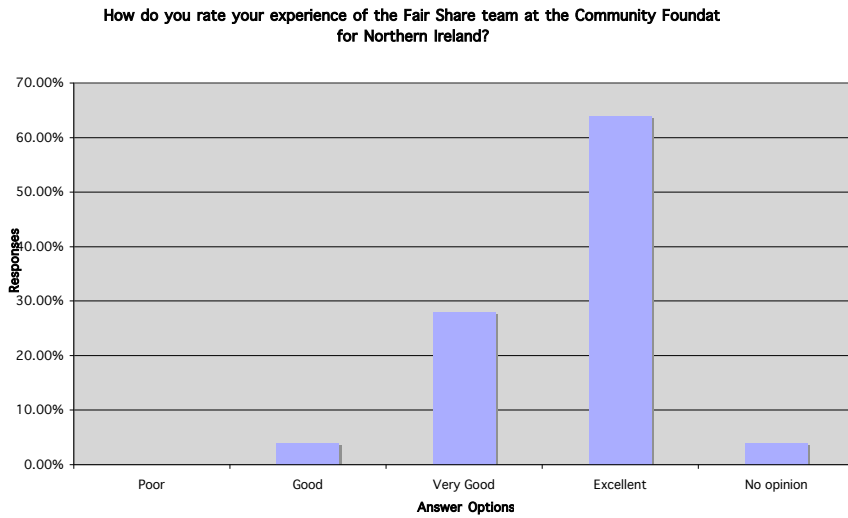
*"Making some financial allowance to the lead partner as they do the administration work and their group do not benefit more than any other group in the partnership. None of the groups involved have paid staff, depending on volunteers to carry out responsibilities."*

*"Making sure that all the funding is directed to the people and they have their say on what they want to do. One of the partner groups involved was found not to be doing this and fortunately on the last phase of spending, this was addressed and the money went directly to the needs of the members themselves. I would want to make sure that this situation doesn't arise again."*

*"Just the length of time it took to get off the ground. Initially we were told it was for three years and then it was cut to two."*

*"That it would not end and that more support would be provided for projects which are successful under Fair Share. Would prefer to see a partnership approach with other funding bodies i.e Lottery/Atlantic Philanthropies etc. to facilitate project development"*

Finally Question 15 asked about their experience with the CFNI staff team. 96% of respondents rated their experience as 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent' and the remaining one had no opinion.



This speaks volumes about the level of engagement that the staff have had with local groups and their ability to negotiate and facilitate through a range of community issues.

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## WHAT COULD HAPPEN NEXT?

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We have already stated that we view Fair Share, as it has been operated in Northern Ireland, as an innovative form of consensus grantmaking. We therefore have some recommendations for what could happen in the future.

### **Regarding Local Involvement**

The Fairshare programme set out to involve all groups in making the decision about the greatest needs in a community. Not all groups were involved in delivery or the grantmaking process because only groups with related experience took the initiative forward for obvious reasons.

Going forward effort would need to be made to involve all local groups in reviewing what had been achieved and then determining future goals. This would allow different groups to be involved over time. In this way the sense of community ownership and be maintained and there would be a perception of fair treatment relating to grants being made.

### **Regarding the Grantmaking Process**

By involving local community organisations at almost every stage Fair Share has broken new ground. CFNI staff have been involved in organisational-based community development and led inexperienced groups to articulate quite complex changes and outcomes for their projects. However this approach has been time-consuming and costly. It must be recognised by national funders that work such as this is not "administration", it is project development and the costs must be allowable and properly resourced

Work needs to be done on how local groups can monitor and evaluate results and then feed this into a discussion about 'what next?'

### **Regarding further Capacity Building**

Many of the funded organisations are now able to move on to a new stage of development. But in order to do so their skills need further enhancement. This is most evident with regard to planning and strategy skills and financial skills, in particular to enable them to calculate true full costs of their work.

## **Regarding Future Funding**

Any future funds aimed at these organisations should take into account the work already done and involve them in the planning stages. Flexible funding that includes loans as well as other types of funding should be considered.

## **Regarding Social Capital**

One of the main aims of the programme was to build social capital amongst some of the most marginalised communities in Northern Ireland. We have only been able to say that there are preliminary indications that this could be happening. However we have no proper baseline study to use as a reference point, and the whole process will take many more years than this evaluation has covered. We therefore strongly suggest that a longer term longitudinal study should be undertaken, in association with an academic institution, to properly understand the effect this programme, and other factors, are having on social capital in these communities. Only then will we be able to properly understand the dynamics involved between funding programmes and the development of this most intangible, yet critical social force.

## **Regarding involvement and leadership of local people**

The Fairshare programme set out to involve all local groups in a community in agreeing what the most important needs were. Going forward efforts will need to be made to continually refresh involvement by returning to the 'bigger picture of local needs' and continuing to seek out and persuade more local groups to become involved in determining future goals. In this way there can be a true sense of community ownership and fair treatment and a stronger platform from which to manage the distribution of funds.





