

Growth against the odds

**How three projects continued their work in
a hostile, economic climate**

chances4change Wellbeing Portfolio



Picture courtesy of Community Cookery Development

Executive Summary

This is one of three legacy papers produced by Building Blocks, funded by the Big Lottery through the chances4change portfolio. Building Blocks was a capacity-building project, where one aim was to develop and communicate learning from the other chances4change projects.

This paper presents findings from interviews with three health promotion projects who have sustained their work beyond the end of chances4change funding from the Big Lottery. Details are given of the three projects, the models of sustainability they have used, how they made this happen, useful strategies for sustaining work beyond short-term funding, and advice to projects hoping to sustain their own work.

The projects emphasised the importance of having multiple funding streams and using short-term funding to help establish a reputation and trial new models of work. They used a range of strategies to become sustainable, including strategic networking, streamlining their work, horizon scanning, being flexible in order to tailor-make products, evidencing their work, using classic business models to a greater or lesser extent, being aware of the pitfalls of setting up on your own and being positive even in the current poor economic climate. This paper ends with a set of recommendations for short-term funded health promotion projects about strategies they might consider using in trying to become more sustainable.

Other papers available from chances4change are:

- Legacy 1: “Don’t leap in with your cape flying going, ‘Hi, I’m here to change your life’”: Case studies of health promotion with seldom-heard groups
- Legacy 2: Accessing social capital in later life: the social benefits of walking groups
- A chance to change: results from the lifetime of the chances4change portfolio 2007-2011
- These and further project- and portfolio-level summaries of the work of chances4change projects can be downloaded from www.wellbeingsoutheast.org.uk by the end of January 2012. From then on, memory sticks with this information may be requested by emailing chances4change2@yahoo.co.uk

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- Donna Imrie from the Active Workplace project and Active Solutions (www.active-solutions.co.uk)
- Stuart Brown from the Silver Song Club Resource and Training project and Sing for Your Life (<http://www.singforyourlife.org.uk/>)
- Robin Van Creveld, Community Chef from the Community Cookery Development project and Community Chef - Good Food for All (<http://www.communitychef.org.uk/>)

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Structure of this report

This report opens with an introduction to chances4change, support given to projects to sustain their work, how many have sustained and the models of sustainability they have used. A methodology section follows and outlines the approach taken to gain in-depth information about how three projects sustained their work. The findings section includes detailed descriptions of how each project has managed to sustain its work, including some of the key steps taken. This is followed by a summary of lessons learned across all three projects including helpful and unhelpful strategies they tried in sustaining, why they think they were successful and their advice to other projects wishing to sustain their work. This report concludes with a set of recommendations about sustaining project work.

Introduction

chances4change was a £5.6m portfolio of 62 projects in the South East of England, funded by the Big Lottery Fund Well-being programme. It aimed to redress the hidden health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of people in the South East, targeting 'at risk' groups across the region.

The key aims of chances4change projects were to:

1. increase physical activity, fitness levels or motivation to be more active in the future; and/or
2. improve mental health through preventative approaches, including, as agreed, benefits on proxy variables (including factors known to increase wellbeing, e.g., goal attainment, increased social contact¹) or awareness of mental health needs; and/or
3. increase knowledge and skills around healthy eating, having greater access to healthy food or increase healthy eating; or
4. build capacity for other projects to improve their performance in specified areas.

chances4change was a fixed-term portfolio, with projects funded for up to 3.5 years maximum. The Stage 2 bid had sustainability as a key element for projects to aim toward.

chances4change had used different strategies during the portfolio to support sustainability:

¹ Based on the findings of the *Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project* (2008) http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/migratedD/ec_group/116-08-FO_b and the companion publication by the New Economics Foundation (nef), *Five Ways to Wellbeing* (2008) <http://neweconomics.org/publications/five-ways-to-wellbeing>

1. Organising regional events focused on partnerships and World Class Commissioning
2. Setting up a learning set to help projects develop their business cases with a mock 'Dragon's Den'
3. Delivering two workshops on Cost-benefit analysis, cost-effectiveness and other ways of measuring the financial impact of work
4. Using projects' under-spend to set up bursaries for projects' sustainability activities such as presenting at conferences, commissioning external research and dissemination of materials about projects' work and evaluations.

During the period of this funding, Britain experienced an extremely serious recession and there were a series of heavy cuts to the public sector. By 7th October 2011, 51% (32) of all projects in chances4change had reported back on whether they had been able to sustain, with the remaining projects' statuses unknown. Of these 32, 44% reported having managed to sustain, with 18.8% reporting they had sustained some aspect of their work and 22% saying they had not sustained or did not expect to sustain their work.

Of those that had successfully sustained their work, a number of different models were reported:

- Two projects mainstreamed their work into statutory agencies that were hosting their project
- Two projects managed to gain funding from non-statutory host organisations
- Three had carried out activities that already had sustainability built in (e.g. setting up self-sustaining networks, making resources, buying equipment)
- Two had gained further short-term funding
- One continued to run activities (in a deprived region) through attendees paying for these courses
- One managed to continue through private initiatives
- Three sustained through a combination of the above models

Those that had sustained some part, but not all of their work did so through one or more of the above models.

Aims

This paper aimed to capture learning and advice about making a project sustainable. This was gained by interviewing three projects that had managed to sustain the work carried out by their project beyond the end of chances4change funding through utilising a number of models.

Methodology

The three projects examined here were chosen for their ability to provide rich, in-depth information (Patton, 2002) about sustaining their work beyond short-term funding through a range of models. This is a form of 'intensity sampling', where these projects were chosen for their ability to shed light on the relatively unusual phenomena of being able to sustain through a number of models in a hostile economic climate. As each was at a different stage of making their work sustainable and were using a range of different models they were able to provide advice of relevance to projects and organisations at different stages of development looking to carry out community health promotion work using not-for-profit and streamlined models of working.

Active Workplace

The Active Workplace Officer was employed to develop workplace physical activity and to increase positive attitudes towards healthy eating and improving well being. This project targeted workplaces in areas of deprivation and with high stress levels. The previous employee now works for the host organisation on a freelance basis on a reduced number of hours, and has also recently set up a business and provides training as a freelance.

Community Cookery Development

This project took a strategic approach to community cookery and nutrition skills development by incorporating training of key workers and development of their training programme. The chef running this programme also ran a volunteer strand for community cooks and developed and delivered lifestyles courses. The project was first hosted by Action in Rural Sussex then transferred to the organisation Community Chef - Good Food For All (set up in 2001), run by the chef who delivered the project. He continues to deliver similar work funded by a range of different income streams.

The Silver Song Club Resource and Training Project

This project was part of a wider strand of work undertaken by Sing for Your Life to extend their existing network of singing clubs. They deliver music sessions led by trained facilitators and supported by volunteers for older people (focus on BME groups and deprived areas) at day care centres and community venues. Sing for Your Life was established in 2005. Recently the programme was the subject of a randomised controlled trial (RCT) into the

impact of the work. The trial demonstrated a clinical improvement in the mental health and well being of the intervention group.

An in-depth, semi-structured telephone interview was carried out with two of the projects (Silver Song Club Resource and Training Project and Community Cookery Development) and interviewees consented to being recorded by digital Dictaphone. The interview with Active Workplace was carried out face-to-face after an initial phone interview was cancelled and added to a meeting booked as part of the interviewer's advisory role as part of her other Building Blocks work.

The questions included how the project had sustained their work, when and why they chose those methods, useful strategies for becoming more sustainable and what didn't work so well, advice they would give to projects looking to sustain their work and what they would do differently with the benefit of hindsight (see Appendix One for the full interview schedule).

Unfortunately there was a technical problem with the recording of the interview with Active Workplace. This was discovered on the day after the interview and notes were made under each question to summarise what the interviewee had said. These were sent to the interviewee, who checked the notes for inaccuracies or gaps, made some minor amendments and added some additional notes.

These interviews were transcribed and analysed for key themes, guided by the top-down structure of the interview, but also looking for bottom-up new findings, following the thematic analysis process outlined by Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland (2006), with the aid of the qualitative software program, NVivo.

Findings

1. How the projects have sustained their work

a) Active Workplace

Active Workplace began the process of sustaining their work by making nominal charges for some of their services while still a chances4change-funded project. These did not cover the costs of running sessions, but helped increase credibility among businesses that did not appear to value free training, and provided a small income to aid transition when the funding finished. The Active Workplace Officer, Donna, developed a proposal to continue delivering the project as a freelance with reduced hours and a tighter focus on the priorities of the host organisation. The funding from chances4change ceased on 31st August 2011. Reduced funding for shorter hours continued, provided by the host organisation.

In order to do this, Donna set up as a Sole Trader and has also registered a business with Companies House to develop alongside the Sole Trader activities. As well as continuing to deliver the Active Workplace activities, she has also set up some training through her Sole Trader arm of delivery.

The steps she took to do this were:

- Nominal charging took place during delivery of chances4change project (£20 per team to take part in challenges)
- Sought advice from friends and colleagues already working as Sole Traders and from an accountant
- Developed a costed proposal eight months before the funding ceased, which was accepted by the host organisation
- Bought Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurances
- Registered the company *Active Solutions* with Companies House
- Set up a website by buying a domain name and paying for a template that could be populated with information (not too text heavy)
- Used a logo creation site online – this is not a Vector graphic, so can't be resized without losing resolution, so is a temporary solution
- Works from home on reduced hours
- Invoices the previous host organisation 1/12 of full annual amount each month

b) Community Cookery Development

Robin, the chef delivering this project, began his work much earlier than his chances4change project with some start-up funding from the Scarman Trust. He approached the local NHS trust as he felt it was relevant to health.

They got Lottery funding and hosted Robin's project as part of their Food and Health Partnership, taking overheads to provide support. During the three years of funding he developed ideas,



Picture courtesy of Community Cookery Development

such as cookery leader training, and was given support around becoming sustainable through the Partnership. When this funding ended, he managed to generate a surplus of £20k through contracts from East Sussex County Council, children's services and schools which gave him the confidence to continue this work alone. He then developed a successful bid with Action Rural Sussex for the chances4change funding, which he treated as one strand of funding for part of his work. He works as a Sole Trader through the Community Association, Community Chef -

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Good Food For All. He employs some staff on a sessional basis, rents space with Action in Rural Sussex and has a van with equipment.

The project has a number of different strands of income, which have continued beyond the chances4change funding:

- *Consultancy work* – this was happening at the start of the chances4change funding. It includes advice on setting up community cafes, implementing a community cookery programme and has led to work doing presentations in the wellbeing industry, including for change4life
- *Training* - this includes running courses and programmes of training for statutory agencies, both cookery sessions and cookery leader training
- *Cookery demonstrations* – corporate and community, with different pricing structures
- *Workplace health initiatives*
- *Smoothie bike hire with staff member*

c) Silver Song Club Resource and Training Project

Sing for Your Life started in 2004, when the Director was South East Regional Chairman of Making Music (the National Federation of Music Societies) and started working with the Sidney De Haan Centre who were exploring the benefits of music for people with age-related mental health conditions. At first they worked very closely together, but in 2005 it was decided to separate programme delivery from research. Recently a network run by a pilot by the Sidney De Haan Centre is now being run as a network by Sing for Your Life. There is a team of staff involved in the work.

The Director of Sing for Your Life had worked with one of the key people developing the chances4change portfolio bid. When they asked for volunteers for developing the bid, with the programme being hosted by the Strategic Health Authority, he offered to be on the Board as this was a good opportunity to develop contacts with the NHS.

The chances4change funding was used to extend the existing network of Silver Song Club groups. The project also won funding to run a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) to test the impact of their work. Their team are continuing to build their network through a range of programmes with different client groups - people with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and enduring

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mental health problems. They are currently piloting a ‘music box’ scheme which uses music technology to enable people without musical training to deliver programmes in residential care homes.

People taking part in singing sessions are asked if they can contribute £3 or £4 for a session. As with Active Workplace, where people could afford to do this, the service was valued more. The project has received funding from the Cabinet Office Transition Fund and the Social Enterprise Investment Fund, which has been used to develop new strands of their work.

Although at different stages in their development as sustainable enterprises, all three projects used the chances4change funding period as an opportunity to develop ideas and were finding other ways of generating funds on top of the chances4change funding. The next section describes when they began to think about sustaining their work beyond short-term funding streams like chances4change.

2. When the projects started to think about sustaining

Each project started thinking about sustainability at different times. Robin, manager of the Community Cookery Development project, began thinking about sustainability from the conception of his project, which was first hosted by the NHS with some previous Lottery funding:

If you think about it from the outset, if that's built into your design... which it was into mine... a proportion of my time would be spent on project and business development from Day One – it means that you know that's what you have to do all the time, not at the end of the three years' funding.

This meant that when he received the second grant from the Big Lottery, as part of chances4change, he was already planning how to sustain:

So because I've been part of a Big Lottery funded project before and gone through the doom and gloom of... that funding finishing and seeing a team of 12 people dismantled... I'm realistic and philosophical about the nature of time limited funding... which is why when I received chances4change funding it was never for a full time post, it was for X amount of days a month and that meant you know I knew from Day One it's a time-limited thing... which certainly forced me to treat the project like a social enterprise from the outset.

For the Silver Song Club Resource and Training project, it was the change in the wider economic environment that was the trigger for considering how their work might be made more sustainable.

we started thinking about it ... I guess when the years of plenty came to an end, about... when the financial crisis hit, and then it became obvious that... the public borrowing had to be reduced and everybody's budget was going to be cut. And it was pretty obvious that the first things which would be affected would be... the community public health programmes rather than acute primary and secondary care.

For Active Workplace, the chances4change funding was the beginning of this particular kind of work for the project. They began thinking about sustainability when they were delivering, finding that charging a nominal amount for team challenges both increased the credibility of the project in the eyes of businesses, but also allowed a pot of money to be saved that would help in the transition period between the end of chances4change funding and the beginning of the freelance work undertaken by the manager of Active Workplace, Donna.

Donna took responsibility for putting in a proposal to extend the work on reduced hours on a freelance contract eight months before the project was due to finish. This was not something that had been considered by the host organisation, but they agreed it was a good model and something they were prepared to fund until March 2012 initially.

3. How they came up with their successful ideas for sustaining

As described above, all of the projects had more than one stream of income, and provided either a range of different services (such as training, running sessions and providing demonstrations) or worked with a range of clients in different ways. During the interviews they were asked how they had come up with at least one of their ideas that had been successfully sustained.

For Robin's wider work for Community Chef – Good Food for All (Community Cookery Development), it was a case of experimenting with different ideas:

Through trying different things and seeing what works.

The Active Workplace Officer came up with the idea to go freelance after some training on setting up a social enterprise provided in chances4change through Building Blocks. She said the Networks and Learning Manager, who managed this training, also gave helpful advice.

Stuart from Sing for Your Life, who ran the Silver Song Club Resource and Training project, said the idea for their new 'music box' enterprise came from a serendipitous combination of connections and timing:

like so many of these things, you hear about it by accident... this came up because a new chap has just joined me as... Director of Programmes ... he used to be one of our facilitators and then he went

away... [and] now he's come... [back]. But he was at the Royal Academy at the same time as one of the Directors of this music technology company... And he was already doing some work with them... He heard about this new piece of kit and... in the meantime we'd been doing work funded by the Social Enterprise and Investment Fund to find ways of introducing participatory music into residential care homes to satisfy the requirements of the Care Quality Commission to reduce the use of antipsychotic drugs and I realised that this piece of kit would enable us to do that.

4. Less successful methods for sustaining

As well as trying these successful approaches, the projects had all tried alternative ways of sustaining that were not so successful. These are described below.

Both the Silver Song Club Resource and Training Project and Community Cookery Development had tried to get longer term commissioning from statutory bodies, but this had not proved a successful route as yet.

we continue to try for commissioning, but commissioners sort of retreated into their burrows and it was virtually impossible to contact [them].

I tried to get the Public Health department of the local primary care trust to mainstream my work, proving that I could generate some income... [and] that what I did worked ... at the PCT level I wrote several proposals... none of which they went for... At a regional level I did exactly the same... for a regional thing... which we didn't get. I went to our local council... with the same proposal – they didn't go for it... getting statutory support... as well as running a business... was my first thought of 'How am I going to get some support for this project?' None of them went for it. Although they've subsequently commissioned work from the project. Not masses but some work. So in some ways being a provider rather than being in-house, it's definitely worked for my project, but not as much as I'd hoped

He suggested this was because of the current climate for all statutory agencies, using the NHS as a specific example.

the timing for this has... been awful for them. When I left the NHS... I'd been an employee for three years... [and] seen two restructurings... In the past four years... [since then] there's been a subsequent three restructurings. So that's five restructurings [of the] Primary Care Trust in five years. You know that has a big repercussion on people's ability to forward plan... [and] to procure work. That they went from being... an organisation that did everything, including provision, to an organisation that did commissioning but had a provider arm. They tried

to get the provider arm to secede from them – calling them ‘community health services’, but it’s blatantly still the NHS... And it’s been very difficult for one man bands like me to get in on the commissioning.

Another problem cited by Community Cookery Development were the difficulties caused by rapid changes in policy direction during this period.

one of my strategies that I put a whole lot of time and energy into was preparing for World Class Commissioning, which hasn’t happened... So all of the homework I did, all of the new language I learnt... the business pack I got ready... was a pointless exercise in terms of that framework... when they roll out their next commissioning strategy with a different name, and an even more protracted application process – which they have done for social care – I’ve done some of the work, but actually it’s just put me off doing any of this... so that definitely didn’t work.

Both Community Cookery Development and the Silver Song Club Resource and Training Project talked about having made some successful and some unsuccessful bids for further short-term grant funding.

I’ve written... in the past three year’s probably ten funding applications. None of the big ones have come through, which is a pain because they take a hell of a lot of time. I think four or five small ones have come through. Which has only ever generated probably ten grand in the course of a project. But a small funding application takes me three hours... it’s time well spent... yeah I continue to do that.

I mean basically everything is there for everybody. And if you sit down and work it through, you’re not always successful because there’s never enough money to go round. But... [we] have a pretty high success rate. It’s the people who don’t read the questions and don’t answer them or... rather than meet the objectives of the funder, try to get them to fund some pet project.

The Active Workplace Officer considered other options, but providing a freelance, streamlined service that was based on popular work with companies and fitted with the strategy of her host organisation more tightly was the only one that was available:

[There were n]o other realistic options, it was this or ending the project

5. Useful strategies to support sustainability

All projects were also using a set of strategies that may have increased the likelihood of success of what they sometimes described as lucky or trial-and-error approaches. These may have enabled them to find, recognise and capitalise on such opportunities, and are described below.

a) Being responsive to the current and future context of the project

The Silver Song Club Resource and Training Project and Community Cookery Development described a number of ways they had gained and used knowledge about the wider environment, in terms of policy and other intelligence.

Stuart from Sing for Your Life and the Silver Song Club Resource and Training Project emphasised the importance of staying abreast of current policy and Government strategy

So for example, the DH have just brought out a 52 page document on COPD outcomes and national policy. Well I download those documents ... I don't necessarily read them all, but I read the executive summary and I look at the chapter headings and I probably read the bits which apply to us. But I've always got them and I can always refer to them.

He felt this was important in order to develop genuinely collaborative partnerships with statutory partners:

...we've always made sure that we fully understand government strategy and inform ourselves of government strategy, and worked with... [it so]... I understand how the public sector operates... And we try to develop relationships so that we're working together towards a common end... But to do that you've got to understand... their problems, their difficulties. They're spending public money, they're responsible ultimately to Parliament, and there are restrictions on what they can and... can't do.

By being aware of policy, it was possible to develop products that would be ready to meet a future need.

Feeling the market. That's very important. So knowing what's out there, but also anticipating what will be needed. So when the tide of Change4Life was sweeping over the country, before it hit the country, I had some Change4Life workshops planned, which... [was a] very easy thing to cross brand with... and that was the whole kind of approach. That you take something that is about Change4Life, you put your logo on it, and you deliver it.

And at the same time the reorganisation of the Health Service is putting far greater emphasis on prevention which includes self management of long term conditions... in effect to save the cost of acute care further down the line. So all our programmes are modelled around that

The projects didn't always wait for the policy to be laid out in detail before they started planning to cater for likely changes in system and/or population need.

They engaged in a form of horizon scanning based on likely future outcomes and broad policy aims.

But we've got to prepare for this introduction of personal budgets and I haven't found anybody who can tell me how they're actually going to work. But... the projection is that there'll be a million people using them by 2013... whether it'll happen or not, [we] don't know. But I think it has to come because... [t]here's no way the present system can be afforded anymore... And of course one of the ways of doing it is to produce cost-effective management systems which keep people out of hospital and keep people out of residential care.

So yeah, seeing where that's going ... being ahead of the game. So about two years ago when this recession was really becoming entrenched, where the reds looked like they were... never going to get back into power again, I started thinking about... people who are unemployed, how do I get them back to work. And... I'm very happy to say... the four intensive trainees I've had have all gone on to full... self employment. Which I think in this environment is a really good thing. So... I guess what I'm saying is trying to keep ahead of the game, work out where things are going and where there might be funding or where there might be a need.

b) Building a good reputation

All projects emphasised the importance of building a good reputation, which could then lead to word-of-mouth recommendations, generating more work.

I've had some really well paid consultancy jobs come out of other consultancy jobs if that makes sense. So work leads to work. From the training, people who've come on the training, be it funded work or work that I've been paid to deliver the training, often leads to other work. So for example if I train someone from a Children's Centre, they might then recommend me to their boss and say not only does this guy train, but he does cookery demos or he has a smoothie bike or he has all these other things. So likewise it's kind of within the people I train that often produces more work for a different project...

Active Workplace reported having used the chances4change funding period to build up a good reputation, which helped in getting future work.

Having a good reputation and having built up a customer base of some kind meant an increase in confidence, which helped when pricing the work in the wider market.

I've got a good product, I've got several good products, and the market will pay for them. Be it a school, be it an organisation, be it a company.

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So... yeah knowing ... I guess it's like a pride thing – I know what I do is good, and I'm not scared to charge for it.

c) Networking and partnerships

All projects also emphasised the importance of using networks and building partnerships to help get the work off the ground. In some cases this was being able to make contact with 'internal networks' within, for example, the health sector.

one thing I realised very early on is that the sort of internal networks within the public sector are just as important as they are in business... who you know is important, and you can ring them up. So you know I know chairmen of PCTs, I know chief executives of PCTs... well enough to be able to send them an email and say 'Look I've got this problem, what do you suggest?' and they point me in the right direction.

The importance of this for one of the projects was such that he felt it was important to spend time building contacts by volunteering for work that would bring him into contact with this kind of network:

[The Board]... was taken over the SHA, and then they asked for volunteers to represent the programmes on the board. And I volunteered, and I was quite cold blooded about it ... and I did it because I wanted to ... get... into the SHA network. You've got to... be fairly robust about these things. Otherwise I wouldn't have... taken [it on]... I mean most people wouldn't have... because they've got all these meetings etc.

The result of this was gaining knowledge that could be helpful for ones own organisation.

I'm very much in the loop as far as information coming out of the Health Service is concerned... I see all the stuff which comes round to chairmen and chief executives. So... you know from time to time I've taken part in workshops run by the transition teams to assess how the third sector can contribute and how the commissioning systems need to be adjusted to cope with third sector organisations... information is everything.

Two of the projects specifically mentioned the benefits of using other people's networks by developing contacts with key people. This could lead to recommendations for the service they provided, or provide wider dissemination of their contacts and information.

I tend to use other people's networks a lot. So looking at chances4change there were... 62... [projects and] I probably got actual

work from six of those projects. So simply by using the chances4change network, it... cross pollinated and it brought income into my project. There's other networks that I use... quite informal ones like Facebook, and then quite formal ones like... [the chances4change project] Fresh Ideas [Network]. And that kind of gets my stuff out there.

Two other benefits cited were getting involved with different sectors that had synergy with your own work – e.g. organisations aiming to increase cycling in order to reduce carbon emissions, rather than for health purposes – and being inspired by examples of good practice in other projects.

That [project] really stood out. In many ways I aspired to looking as grown up as they did, just with the way they'd set up their Community Interest Company, the way they set up their roll-out. You know it felt very... corporate how they did that, and I think stood them in good stead and they've worked with a hell of a lot of people as a result.

d) Streamlining your work

Another common thread, mentioned by all projects, was finding ways to streamline your work.

For Active Workplace, this meant aligning the new work much more closely with the aims of the host organisation and with the work most popular with businesses. This meant reducing hours, but it made the proposal appealing to her funders in the host organisation.

Community Cookery Development talked about the importance of ensuring it was feasible to be run by one person with sessional workers.



Picture courtesy of Community Cookery Development

I do fundamentally believe that small is beautiful. And I've never had aspirations to run some big organisation where I employ 20 people as community chefs all over the place. I firmly believe in my ability to make change in the world and make a living for myself. And not being particularly greedy, or particularly avaricious, I keep things very modest... For me a Sole Trader set-up has just worked really well, cos ostensibly the project is me. I might have trained 700 people and have four or five sessional workers who work for me, but it's still me

who answers the phone and it's me who does the books and it's me who updates the website... which has its limitations as well.

He also described using a permaculture design, which included getting the most possible output from any work undertaken

permaculture design is very much taking a multifaceted design approach to whatever you do... as long as you've done the work ... like community cafe training – I've done the work once, I've got the lesson plans, I can always deliver that. The fact I don't market it, or... do it all the time, it simply means I've done the work so the next time someone phones me up and say 'Can you do this?' Yes, it's already planned... [and] I know it works... [Plus] all the things I do can be done in different ways. So a workshop I teach to adults with a little bit of tweaking can become a kids' workshop.

e) Use a range of sources of funding

As outlined in the project descriptions, all projects had a number of different streams of funding. This was a deliberate strategy.

we don't depend on one funding source, you know, we're continually looking for funding from all sorts of sources.

It also meant that projects weren't too reliant on one source when this become untenable, even if they weren't currently using all streams.

never have one income stream, have as many as you can have capacity to run – several income streams can stay dormant for years

f) Developing new streams of work

Two projects described how they trialled new activities while allowing for development and innovation:

You know... I've started with the aesthetic, and a good idea, and I'm letting the details evolve alongside that... I'm very much a ... think big, fill the details in as you go along... fastidious business people would say that's a terrible approach... [but] it's always stood me in good stead. The approach falls over when my workload is very heavy... [but] it's a very creative design approach... very dynamic.

so you go to a... [partner organisation], say 'We've got this idea - shall we work together to make it work for you?'... it's like anything else which you introduce which is new, there are teething problems and adjustments which need to be made... We've got to tailor-make the programmes and everything to suit [the organisation].

g) Market share and exclusivity – two different approaches

Two projects had very different approaches to how they approached the wider market and the possibility of others using their ideas.

Sing for Your Life worked to a deliberate strategy to increase market share and control over their products.

what you have to do is reduce both operating costs and reduce your central overhead, and also increase your market share I suppose, talking in business terms...

Silver Song Club is a registered brand. Sing for Your Life Ltd is a registered company and charity... As far as... [the 'music box'] work with [the music technology company] is concerned... they had no inkling that this home entertainment system could be used in this way ... it's a completely new market for them. So we have exclusivity. And if somebody walked into our... distributor and said well we want one of these machines ... first of all they won't be able to use it, because with that it's rather like a desktop – if you don't have the program, it's not going to work. And we have the programs and... we are producing... the arrangements of the music which goes into it, so we have a copyright as well. So... we have that protection.

By contrast, the training and resources provided by Community Chef - Good Food for All were not copyrighted, which was a deliberate choice.

What I do is transparent, so anyone can find out how I run Good Food for All and Community Chef. By running a training programme, everything is incredibly transparent. So I train loads of people, they get all my recipes, they get all my templates, they get all my tips and things. I think that's a really good thing because it shows that I believe in what I'm doing, rather than being cagy and putting trademarks on everything I do.

This reflected a slight difference of opinion in how much of a traditional business model to use in these enterprises. Sing for Your Life thought that running the project like any other business was key:

We're growing now from being a sort of very local charity, you know we've gone through the regional stage, we're now going national and whatever, and we have international connections as well... and... if you're going to generate that growth you have to plan for it and ... in the same way as any other multi-outlet business ... like Macdonald's, KwikFit, Ballantine's, whatever... you have to use those models... You can't shy away from money as a lot of people do. And I mean if you

look at the big charities like Save the Children Fund... they all employ very experienced business people to run the business side.

The Community Chef - Good Food for All interviewee felt that business skills were important, but took a slightly different approach.

using the language and the sneaky tricks of the corporate sector transposed onto the community sector, I think can stand people in very good stead. I don't mean sacking people when times get tough, what I mean is... proper social marketing – proper hard hitting and sexy-looking initiatives which make people think 'Okay there's a reason why I should eat more fruit and vegetables...' which I don't think any of us in the voluntary sector have done that well really... So... [s]wim in the waters but don't drink them.

6. Less successful strategies

The Active Workplace interviewee spoke of the comparative lack of success she'd had with standard marketing tools over use of contacts and networks.

Standard marketing leaflets had limited impact

She said it was too early to tell if marketing through social media, such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Email Chimp, had been effective or not.

Community Cookery Development had found that products needing large overheads and large amounts of administration were not good models for a one-person organisation to manage.

I had to buy in a Yoga instructor, I had to buy in a Tai-Chi instructor, I had to buy in a sort of wild food person who did the nature walks... so it was just a costly thing to run. And then to take something that's that costly and look to be commissioned to run it, which is what I was hoping would happen – it just wasn't a goer... good ideas that are quite complex like that cost money, and it took a huge amount of my time just administrating it

One way that Community Cookery Development sustained their work was through training others in short courses on healthy cooking, aiming to ensure ideas disseminated widely. This worked with many organisations – such as schools – but was less effective with some.

I probably worked with eight pupil referral units – only one of those... actually went and took the ball and ran with it ... so that didn't work very well really... and the nature of working with those... young people is six weeks is not enough. Whereas in other contexts, in children and family centres, it worked very well.

7. Why do they think they were successful at sustaining their work?

When asked why they thought they had been successful at sustaining their work, each attributed this to different kinds of reasons.

Active Workplace emphasised how redesigning their project had meant a better fit for the commissioning organisation.

It provide a cost effective way for Active Sussex to continue the programme and also it gave then the opportunity to align... [it] with their own priorities.

Community Cookery Development talked about the importance of personal attributes suited to setting up as a one-person business.

Personality wise, I'm very driven, and I'm very creative, and I work exceptionally hard.

I'm very good at self publicity

He also emphasised the importance of having support from others.

I've had some really fantastic help along the way. So ... you know be it colleagues at Action in Rural Sussex, be it colleagues at the Lottery, or chances4change... be it advocates within councils, be it my partner, be it friends... you know I've had a lot of help... [I]t's not all me, it's the fact that people like what I do and they're up for helping me... you don't get far without mates really.



Picture courtesy of Silver Song Club Training & Resource Project

Both Community Cookery Development and the Silver Song Club Training and Resource Project stressed the importance of being able to evidence the impact of your work.

I evaluate what I do... baseline stuff, post-initiative stuff. And then from a business point of view, I always ask people what they think.

[I]nitially people used to say...how do you know it does any good? ...observation, anecdotal evidence isn't sufficient... and my reaction was well you can be certain of one thing, it didn't do you any harm. But since then... we've had a randomised controlled trial and our QALYS figure came out at 14,000 which is very cost effective... compared with the NICE guideline of 30,000. So... we've got the scores for SF12 and HADS ... the other standard measures, we've got the CORE scores for mental health. And this is really what proves the cost effectiveness, because that's what you have to show.

Both also noted the importance of being in the right place at the right time – but this could equally demonstrate their ability to capitalise on opportunities.

The timing has been right for both the kind of rise in obesity but also the rise in kind of celebrity chef-ery. The rise in ... it's on the telly, there's gratuitous cookery everywhere... that helps me immensely, even though what I do is the antithesis of that... But simply riding that wave of Masterchef has helped me immensely.

But a lot of it is luck, and we just if you like hit it when people were waking up to the impact of demographic change, the sheer numbers of older people that were going to need looking after and the costs involved, and we came up with some solutions.

They both also agreed about the importance of having tenacity and persevering in the face of difficulties.

you know you have set-backs, it's not easy, you get knocked back, you have to find alternative solutions all the time, but it's ... no different from running any other business ... that's what it's all about really.

the strategy that stood me in good stead is... not to be swept along by the tide of negative thinking about things. There's many sources of funding, there's many creative approaches to ensuring sustainability. And if everyone's feeling the pressures, everyone's freaked out about it, nothing's going to happen.

8. What advice would they give to other projects hoping to sustain their work?

Perhaps unsurprisingly, each project gave different advice.

a) What they would do differently

Active Workplace said that no other model would have been a realistic way of sustaining the project.

Community Cookery Development said they would have given themselves 'a funkier name', but had also learned the importance of having a formal contract around the sharing of evaluation data with partners.

the only real robust stats for [this area] I had are things that have come through... [another organisation]... The last time I asked I got a very curt reply saying 'We're not giving them to you, you were only the trainer,'... which was not our agreement. [So]... you know what I'd do differently? I'd write a... delivery contract.

The Silver Song Club Resource and Training project talked about the hard, voluntary work at the beginning.

I don't know, because... we really started in such a small way... where we had no money, no bank account, no organisation. I borrowed a computer from somewhere and just started from absolute scratch. I'm not sure I'd do that again... [because you know I did it on a purely voluntary basis for a year.

b) Choose your contacts carefully

Active Workplace discussed the importance of networking where it will have the most impact, and that Sole Trader networking meetings were useful, but not for generating business contacts who will commission your work. As discussed above, key contacts were seen as useful in terms of tapping into wider networks.

c) Consider the full implications of becoming a Sole Trader

Active Workplace suggested you consider your full cost implications at the outset. These were in terms of costs to be considered in deciding on a rate to charge – such as the loss of employer's pension contributions, allowance for sick days and annual leave. There are limits on what you can do as a Sole Trader working for an organisation as compared to being their employee - such as using office space legally – this is put in place to protect employees from being put onto contracts solely to avoid their responsibilities to you as a formal employer. She argued that as you don't have the protections of being an employee you should be sure that you gain benefits such as being more in control of your workload and how you manage your time.

She suggested that the best thing that people intending to set up as Sole Traders could do would be to ask for advice from an existing Sole Trader.

d) The current policy environment provides great opportunities

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The Silver Song Club Resource and Training project suggested the current policy environment should be capitalised on by health promotion projects.

I think that the potential for this sort of work is greater than it has ever been. The changes which have been made with the formation of Public Health England, whereby the public health budget which effectively is prevention has been separated from the... NHS budget... under the present system only about 2%, if not less than 2%, is being devoted to prevention... and that wasn't ring-fenced... the rumour is it could be [a considerable] increase. And at the same time every paper you read... [is] all about involving the community in tertiary care and using third sector and voluntary community organisations...

e) Keep an eye on the bigger picture

The Community Cookery Development manager suggested that projects take a wider view than UK policy, to map wider trends that might impact on the local context in the future.

I'd say... try and get an overview where things are going in Europe generally regarding the field ... so be it public health, be it the environmental work, be it children and families ... try and get an overall view, and put that in context of pervasive trends in the world... if... people look at the bigger picture, they can make whatever they're doing a little bit more holistic in order to tackle the bigger issues.

f) Develop strong research evidence

The Silver Song Club Resource and Training project also emphasised the importance in being able to demonstrate that what you do has strong research evidence, even if your project has to develop such research.

Well whatever you do, it needs to be solidly based, so it needs to be based on some sort of research... It's got to have very clearly defined outcomes which are based on research. It has got to be independently evaluated and preferably with an RCT... but... [that is] incredibly expensive... But... hopefully they will produce a lower level acceptable model which would be more suitable for third sector organisations. But... you've got to have something which you know has got credibility.

g) Make whatever you do transferable

The Community Cookery Development interviewee suggested that the permaculture design idea of avoiding wasteful effort was key.

making sure that whatever I do is transferable... so... I can always add value to something I've done before.

h) Have a positive attitude

Finally Robin from Community Chef suggested that:

a positive attitude is always going to help.

Summary of findings

Although their experiences and approaches differed, there were some clear points of consensus as to strategies and ideas that had helped these projects to sustain, and the following broad key learning points emerged.

1. Use a range of funding streams

Each project used a combination of different strands of funding, which included at least one of the following: consultancy advice, training, provision of sessions, running demonstrations, short-term funding and hiring equipment out. Having a range of funding streams available – even if some lay dormant for years – and treating short-term funding as just one source of revenue – were ways the projects mitigated the risks involved in becoming sustainable. This was especially helpful when certain streams of funding – such as getting mainstream funding from statutory services – had not been successful during the lifetime of the chances4change project. One project found that a model depending on disseminating ideas through training a third party did not work with every client group or setting.

Two projects reported that short-term funding was worth going for, but not to be relied upon. Having a good knowledge of what a funder wants and a willingness to provide this was important in gaining funding, but should not be the only stream of funding as it is very competitive.

2. Use short-term funding to build a good reputation, find alternative funding and trial new ways of working

All projects discussed ways that their short-term funding (from chances4change and other sources) helped them to lay the groundwork for future sustainability. All of the projects interviewed had begun to think about alternative ways of sustaining during the project, and had developed or already had alternative ways of generating revenue running alongside. Simply having the freedom to try to generate income while other money was coming in could provide confidence about ‘going it alone’, as well as providing the chance to test new lines of revenue and models of working.

This kind of funding was also used to build a good reputation, which could lead to future work through existing contacts and their networks.

3. Be open to new opportunities and ready to seize them

The projects talked about getting their ideas due to ‘luck’, experimentation or there being no other options. However, their discussion of strategies for sustaining their work suggested they were aware of and receptive to new opportunities and able to move quickly to trial products that met those needs. These strategies are outlined below.

a. Use strategic networking

All emphasised the importance of building useful networks through taking a strategic approach to networking. Useful contacts included those who were

part of important 'inner' networks, such as high-level health service contacts who could share useful information with you, contacts from other networks who would publicise your work, those outside your industry who may have the same goals and other projects who had successfully sustained their work. Two projects also discussed the importance of speaking to experienced people who could advise on using different business models, such as accountants, successful Sole Traders and organisations offering training in setting up social enterprises. One project suggested that having a good reputation and working through existing contacts was far more successful than using standard marketing leaflets.

b. Streamline your work

All also spoke of the importance of streamlining your work. This included making it more strategically focused on a funding organisation's aims, reducing overheads, avoiding duplication of effort and making it feasible for a single person to run if this was your aim. This meant that services involving payment of multiple casual members of staff and having responsibility for the administration (rather than turning up and delivering to an organisation that provided administration) was untenable.

c. Use horizon scanning

Two projects actively engaged in forms of horizon scanning so they would be prepared for capitalising on future opportunities as soon as they arose. This involved considering current and nascent policy directions and wider social trends and then working out how their organisation could meet likely future needs.

d. Allow time to tailor and develop new work solutions

When developing new streams of work, two projects emphasised the importance of allowing space for ideas to develop and change so they were tailored solutions that worked for the client group, organisation or in meeting the objectives.

e. Use mainstream business principles

Although two projects talked about using business approaches they differed in how much they embraced these ideals, particularly around copyrighting ideas. One aimed to gain the largest market share while the other aimed to disseminate ideas to as wide an audience as possible, including through other people.

4. Reasons for success

In terms of why they felt they had been successful, some personal traits were mentioned, such as being tenacious, driven, creative, working hard and persevering in the face of difficulties. Two projects felt that being able to evidence the impact of your work was also critical.

5. Pitfalls to avoid

In terms of common pitfalls to avoid for a project just considering sustaining, the projects provided a range of very specific pieces of advice. Of those not already mentioned, these focused on the differences between being an employee and setting up independently, such as writing delivery contracts for your work and being clear about the realities of becoming a Sole Trader or volunteer when starting out.

6. Advice to projects

This included seeing new Public Health policy changes as a great opportunity to find funding for health promotion work and to have a positive attitude, despite the current economic climate.

Limitations and strengths

This paper has described how three chances4change projects at different stages of development managed to sustain their work in an extremely hostile climate. The projects were chosen as they had developed their work over different time periods within the last decade, focused on the delivery of specific outcomes and had been establishing this work, in one form or another during this time. As this paper was based on the opinions of the projects only, there may have been some important aspects of the way they work that could have been overlooked or may not be obvious to them in the way it might to a less successful organisation looking in. Although not exhaustive or prescriptive, it has provided some detailed insight into the strategies used by three projects that have been successful in continuing their work, which is in keeping with the aim of qualitative, exploratory work.

Recommendations

Pragmatic recommendations from this work for projects wishing to find ways to sustain are summarised below.

- Develop a range of funding streams, even if some lay dormant for years.
- Get advice from experienced people who can advise on using different business models, such as accountants, successful Sole Traders and organisations offering training in setting up social enterprises.
- Understand and meet the aims of funders in bids, but do not rely upon short-term funding.
- Use short-term funding to develop alternative methods of sustaining your work, to trial new ideas and to build a good reputation.

- Take a strategic approach to networking, finding contacts with useful knowledge who will publicise your work to their own networks or may share your goals but work in another industry.
- Once you have a good reputation it may be easier to find work through existing contacts rather than through disseminating standard marketing leaflets.
- Streamline your work to have a strategic focus on meeting organisations' needs, reducing overheads, avoiding duplication of effort and making it feasible for a single person to run if this was your aim.
- Engage in horizon scanning so you can prepare for new opportunities before they arise.
- Have the flexibility to allow new ideas to develop and change so they work exceptionally well for your client group or partner organisation.
- Consider your wider aims as an organisation when thinking about how and whether to protect ideas.
- Be able to evidence the impact of your work.
- Being tenacious, driven, creative and persevering in the face of difficulties helps.
- Consider the differences between being an employee and setting up independently very carefully and put delivery contracts or fee structures in place that protect you.
- Have a positive attitude, despite the current economic climate – there are opportunities out there, such as the new Public Health policy changes.

References

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Appendix One

Interview Schedule

Interview questions for sustainability legacy paper

In what ways has it been sustained?

When did they start thinking about sustaining your project?

Were there other ways they tried to sustain your project that were not successful?

How did they come up with the idea to sustain it in the way it is sustained now?

What steps did they take to make that happen?

What do they think are the reasons why you've been successful?

What strategies were particularly helpful?

What didn't work so well?

If they were starting another project like this, what would they do differently?

Finally, what advice would you give to a project considering trying to sustain in this way?