

Funding community groups

On 3 May [2001], the day the General Election was to have taken place, various voluntary sector luminaries were invited to an urgent press conference at 11 Downing Street to hear a raft of announcements by Chancellor Gordon Brown, Education Secretary David Blunkett, and the two voluntary sector ministers Paul Boateng and Lord Falconer. The two Cabinet ministers even left late for the end-of-term Cabinet meeting next door.

There were several announcements, including:

- The areas for the local *Childrens Funds* – see page 3;
- *Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chests* in 88 local areas of England;
- Funding for the *Mentoring Fund* (£5.3 million over three years for mentoring organisations) and £1.05 million for a *National Mentoring Network*;
- £1.7 million for a community organisations information database;
- £400,000 to assist recruitment of charity trustees;
- £500,000 for media work by volunteer bureaux;
- £320,000 for community development training through the Federation of Community Work Training Groups.

Though several of these announcements were repetitions, there *was* some new money. The full range of Government community funding programmes – now quite a wide variety – is summarised in the box opposite.

Also launched was an impressive consultation document: *Funding Community Groups*. This heralds “*a more integrated and accessible approach to the funding of community groups*”, including:

- the establishment of an integrated source of information about Government funding, probably a local Council for Voluntary Service or Rural Community Council;
- recognition of the need for outreach and development support for small grants programmes;
- simplified application processes and a single grant administrator for Government small grants funding streams in each area;
- options for rationalising Government funding initiatives.

The consultation document seeks advice on good local funding practice, development support, information provision, and website design, and views on several questions:

- how to meet the needs of groups without internet access;
- the feasibility of a single access point and administrator for small grants programmes, how big an area it is feasible to cover, and even whether to amalgamate all the programmes into a single stream;
- the feasibility of a single application form;
- the importance of separating outreach and development support functions.

The thinking in this document shows signs of an unusually wide range of participation from inside and outside government. The credit lies with an Inter-Departmental Working Group on Resourcing Community Capacity Building chaired by Charles Woodd, now working in the Home Office but formerly with *Community Matters*. Replies are sought by 23 July. NS

Funding Community Groups published by the Home Office Active Community Unit, Horseferry House, Dean Ryle Street, London SW1P 2AW, tel: 020 7217 8400, e-mail: public_enquiry.acu@homeoffice.gov.uk, or www.homeoffice.gov.uk under Volunteering.

Current small grants programmes

Community Resource Fund

£170,000 pa 1999-2001, grants of £50-£500 for small groups to pay for activities, events, equipment, or running costs, piloted in 30 neighbourhoods from November 1999, administered by Home Office and Community Development Foundation.

Community Development Learning Fund

£650, 000 pa mid-1999-2001, grants up to £3,000 for training, peer support and networking for small and marginalised small groups, piloted in 18 areas, administered by Home Office and Federation of Community Work Training Groups.

Community Champions Fund

£3 million pa 2001-4, grants up to £2,000 for activists and "*individual champions who can make a difference*" to develop their skills and encourage involvement in regeneration, administered by Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) through Government Offices for the Regions (GORs).

Awards for All

£30 million (including Wales and Northern Ireland) for 2000-1, grants up to £5,000 to fund projects which bring communities together for arts, sports, heritage, social and other community activities, aimed small community groups across UK, administered through joint Lottery arrangements led mainly by the Community Fund.

Local Network of Childrens Funds

£70 million over 2001-4, grants likely to be under £7,000 to alleviate child poverty by funding groups working with children, administered through a partnership led by Community Foundation Network.

Tenant Empowerment Grant Programme

£6 million pa, relaunched 1999, grants £6,000-£8,000 for training and capacity building to enable council tenants to increase their influence over management of homes, administered by Dept of Environment Transport and Regions (DETR).

Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chests

£50 million over 2001-4, to stimulate community involvement in regeneration, for small neighbourhood groups and other communities of interest in 88 areas, administered by DETR (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit) through GORs.

New Deal for Communities (Community Chests)

Each Chest will be around £20,000 in 14 new Deal areas, making grants of £1,000+ to promote community activity and support new groups, administered by DETR.

Single Regeneration Budget and Health Action Zones

Several of these also have Community Chest funds.

Millennium Award Schemes

£101 million through 107 schemes, making grants of £2,000-£15,000 to enable individuals to put ideas for community projects into action, fulfilling personal goals and benefiting communities. Funding fully committed across UK through Millennium Commission.

UnLtd Millennium Awards

£3 million pa, grants of £2,000 to give flexible access to funding and support for individuals developing community projects across UK, launch Autumn 2001 through an independent foundation developed by CAN, School for Social Entrepreneurs, Comic Relief, Changemakers, Scarman Trust, McKinseys.

Adult and Community Learning Fund

£20 million over four years from Autumn 1999, grants up to £30,000 to fund innovation in re-engaging adults in learning, via community groups in housing, childcare, environment, 280 projects across England, administered by DfEE.

Neighbourhood Support Fund

£60 million over three years from Autumn 1999, grants mainly in £20,000-£100,000 range, to re-engage disaffected 13-19 year olds in education and employment, DfEE funds managed by a voluntary sector consortium, funding 5,000 community projects in 40 deprived areas.

This article appeared in *Trust & Foundation News*, June 2001, ©Nigel Siederer and the Association of Charitable Foundations.

Caution: The information is no longer up to date, but Government websites are a useful source of current information. Use a search engine to search for the name of the fund.