Big Local theory of change

The Big Local theory of change was produced after a series of group discussions and interviews with Local Trust and the other seven organisations (known as delivery partners) directly involved in setting up Big Local. Their views, opinions and ideas have been brought together in this paper which sets out the Big Local theory of change in more detail, including how the Big Local outcomes can be achieved.

To support this process Local Trust have used New Philanthropy Capital's Theory of Change process (http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/theory-of-change/) to outline how we suggest Big Local will meet its intended outcomes. The theory of change considers a range of inputs and activities that help us take steps towards meeting programme objectives, while making clear the assumptions and context behind Big Local. Attached at appendix 1 is the logic chain used by Local Trust and its delivery partners that explains this process followed.

What is Big Local?

Big Local is a programme that brings together all the local talent, ambitions, skills and energy from individuals, groups and organisations who want to make their area an even better place to live. It is supported by a £200m Big Lottery Fund endowment, which seeks to achieve four main outcomes over at least ten years in 150 areas. The four outcomes for the programme are:

- communities will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them
- people will have increased skills and confidence, so that they continue to identify and respond to needs in the future
- the community will make a difference to the needs it prioritises
- people will feel that their area is an even better place to live

Assumptions

Big Local was developed based on a number of assumptions and lessons from previous programmes - a number of which are outlined in detail in Local Trust's 'Creating lasting change' paper. Some of the basic assumptions about Big Local are:

- residents have a capacity and desire to drive change, and can achieve lasting and positive changes for the areas where they live
- previous models have failed to ultimately transfer power and control to residents; the Big Local funding model will put residents in the driving seat by giving them power over decisions made about money
- building networks, relationships, support and expertise will facilitate and foster resident involvement in decision-making activities
- investment in people, communities and locally driven enterprise and investment will support sustainable positive change

Enabling factors

The following factors need to exist in Big Local areas for positive change to be possible in areas.

- volunteer and resident participation
- long term investment

- direct funding processes to areas and residents
- a shared vision that directs action

Aim

The aim of the Big Local programme as defined by Local Trust and its delivery partners is to ensure:

"People are connected, people have choices and people are supported to achieve lasting change in the places where they live"

This statement aims to explain what we are trying to achieve through the support we offer to Big Local areas.

Activities

The support and activities Big Local offers to areas aims to encourage, develop and facilitate environments where change can occur. The support provided by Local Trust and its delivery partners include:

- financial investment of at least £1 million to each of the 150 Big Local areas over at least ten years
- guidance, direction and support (through Big Local reps, Local Trust and its partners)
- opportunities for connections and networking between areas so that communities can learn from each other
- advice and information that will support people locally in identifying options and implementing choices for action to make progress on priorities
- a structured approach to identifying priorities and supporting change processes, developing locally created needs using asset-based assessments, leading to community-led visions and planning
- support for individuals to develop skills and knowledge, offering options for people to participate and gain from new experiences

Outputs

The activities and support offered to Big Local areas aims guide and support them through processes that strengthen relationships and enable resident-led decision-making. This will also build resident understanding of how to develop ideas into projects and activities.

The theory of change outlines the types of outputs and outcomes that we expect from the **support** that Big Local offers. This includes:

- **connections:** new connections will be established between and across Big Local areas through people coming together in new ways via a range of activities and conversations
- **knowledge:** new knowledge will develop in Big Local areas across a wide variety of themes and subject matter, whether it's an increased understanding of resident-led processes, how to engage residents and other people in Big Local areas, and/or generating new awareness about a particular issue or need. This outcome is directly supported by peer-to-peer learning events run by the NANM or by knowledge sharing activities through Small Change, Capacity Global and UnLtd.
- **options:** people in Big Local areas develop options for themselves and set local priorities as a result of knowledge, awareness and new connections. For example, options might emerge as a way to solve a local problem through a relationship that has been developed between the Big Local area and a local organisation.
- **skills:** through peer-to-peer learning or other learning experiences residents and others gain skills and increased social capital. New capabilities may include:
  - formal skills in IT

- employability skills gained from chairing meetings
- managing projects
- public speaking
- working with people
- developing partnerships and relationships, and
- communicating needs and priorities

Intermediate outcomes

Local Trust believes that if people have the skills, confidence and the necessary tools to support and develop their Big Local priorities, they will be empowered to take action in response to those priorities identified. The following **intermediate outcomes** are expected to follow:

- **relationships:** important relationships are developed within Big Local areas between residents and organisations; people who hold power; people who have access to power and decisions; and, people who can help solve problems. Achieving this outcome implies that Big Local steering groups or partnerships will create connections and networks of both individuals and organisations that have the ability to support and lead change.
- **influencing:** new relationships, connections and networks will create greater opportunities for influencing. In addition, Big Local partnerships will use their funding to have a greater influence over what happens locally and have an influence in areas where previously they may not have had a voice.
- **priorities and plans:** priorities for Big Local areas will be developed through resident-led processes and they will self-identify the relevant issues, themes and actions to target. Local Trust expects Big Local residents to identify these according to need and to put in place clear strategies for building on assets, resolving issues and tackling challenges in order to achieve positive lasting change in their area.

As a consequence, we expect these intermediate outcomes to support people to achieve the Big Local outcome of:

"Increased skills and confidence, so that areas continue to identify and respond to needs in the future"

As Big Local areas identify priorities, explore options and make choices the following intermediate outcomes will also occur:

- **taking action:** as people in Big Local areas take action to achieve the priorities identified in their visions and plans, they will begin delivering activities through having conversations and working with a range of different people to progress their plan and projects.
- **choices:** through Big Local we hope residents will develop the ability to influence and develop options for their areas and be able to make more choices about how things are done in ways that meet their needs.
- **greater control:** Big Local residents having increased knowledge, choice, influence, power and stronger relationships ultimately leads to greater control. The support given to Big Local areas aims to develop a stronger and more active resident voice in all 150 areas. The process aims to encourage people not to be simply recipients of services and projects, but to be the drivers and designers of change.
- **on-going influence:** people in Big Local areas will be encouraged to find and develop sustainable ways to maintain residents' role as active citizens who have a say. Their voices will be developed and heard so that they will be reflected in the decisions made about the place where they live. This will lead to lasting change as we believe that if residents have the foundation of these skills they can repeat these processes in response to any new issue or need that arises.

As a result of the intermediate outcomes of increased action, choices and control in Big Local areas, we expect areas can meet the outcome:

"communities will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them"

Outcomes

Collectively, over the longer term (up to 15 years), Local Trust expects these intermediate outcomes to have a positive effect in Big Local areas. Through their achievements (described above) we anticipate that residents in Big Local areas will continue to **make a difference to the needs that have been prioritised** in their plans and ultimately achieve the four Big Local outcomes**.**

Just **how** people in Big Local areas will make a difference to the needs they have prioritised remains to be seen. Through its research and learning work, Local Trust will find out whether the activities and outputs in the 150 Big Local areas (over 10-15 years), support a process of change that successfully leads to the four Big Local outcomes. Whether this is successful will depend on what Big Local residents perceive as a lasting positive change in their areas. This will be assessed by Big Local partnerships each year through a process of self-evaluation where they will decide how to measure difference or change in their areas.

At this early stage of Big Local we can only speculate about the types of things that will make a difference, or what will provide the evidence of change. We know that we do not have all the answers about the long term outputs or impacts that will be achieved in Big Local areas. Some of the ideas which have already been put forward by Big Local areas present a starting point of identifying where they will be able to make a difference to the priorities that they have chosen to address. Some of the ideas in development are:

- Big Local areas owning and controlling a greater share of community assets
- Big Local areas setting priorities and developing solutions around local issues such as access to credit and loans
- Big Local areas using social investment for housing, developing local cooperative housing projects that provide good quality housing services, with residents developing their own networks for support
- Big Local areas doing things for themselves
- Big Local areas increasing opportunities, pathways and access to training, jobs, business and services for residents
- Big Local areas developing and formalising governance models and developing resident-led processes on their own terms

This theory of change broadly indicates a progression through the Big Local intermediate outcomes. We recognise that the nature of community development and regeneration is such that new ideas, new residents, or external issues will affect Big Local areas, so the course of change we have outlined is not a linear process.

Additionally, policy and service changes that may occur over the next 15 years including funding, tax, welfare and availability of, and access to, support will also influence the process and impact of the Big Local programme. As such, it is difficult to predict how these external influences will affect the 150 areas over time. However, if Big Local areas achieve the intermediate outcomes; if they are able to achieve priorities and deliver their plans; if people feel they have developed skills, connections, relationships and knowledge along their Big Local journey; we believe they will be empowered to achieve the overall Big Local outcome of **making their area an even better place to live.**

Evidence - how will we know?

So, how will we know that Big Local is on the right track? One way of checking progress is to use the above intermediate outcomes to develop a set of indicators. An indicator is information which shows whether something is happening. Local Trust will use the indicators we develop to determine if Big Local is achieving the four Big Local outcomes and the ultimate aim.

These indicators will reflect research questions that will explore whether a particular intermediate outcome is occurring with areas and across the programme. For example to test for:

Increased knowledge - we may ask:

- are people in Big Local areas accessing learning events?
- do Big Local residents feel they can access information they need or can make informed choices?
- what choices are Big Local residents making?
- what influences the choices made by Big local residents?

New connections or networks - we may ask:

- how are Big Local partnerships and their support infrastructures developing?
- who is on the Big Local partnerships? How are residents in Big Local areas involved?
- how are Big Local partnerships involving people from beyond the partnership in the Big Local area?
- what new connections are being made through Big Local events, activities and projects? And, for what benefit?

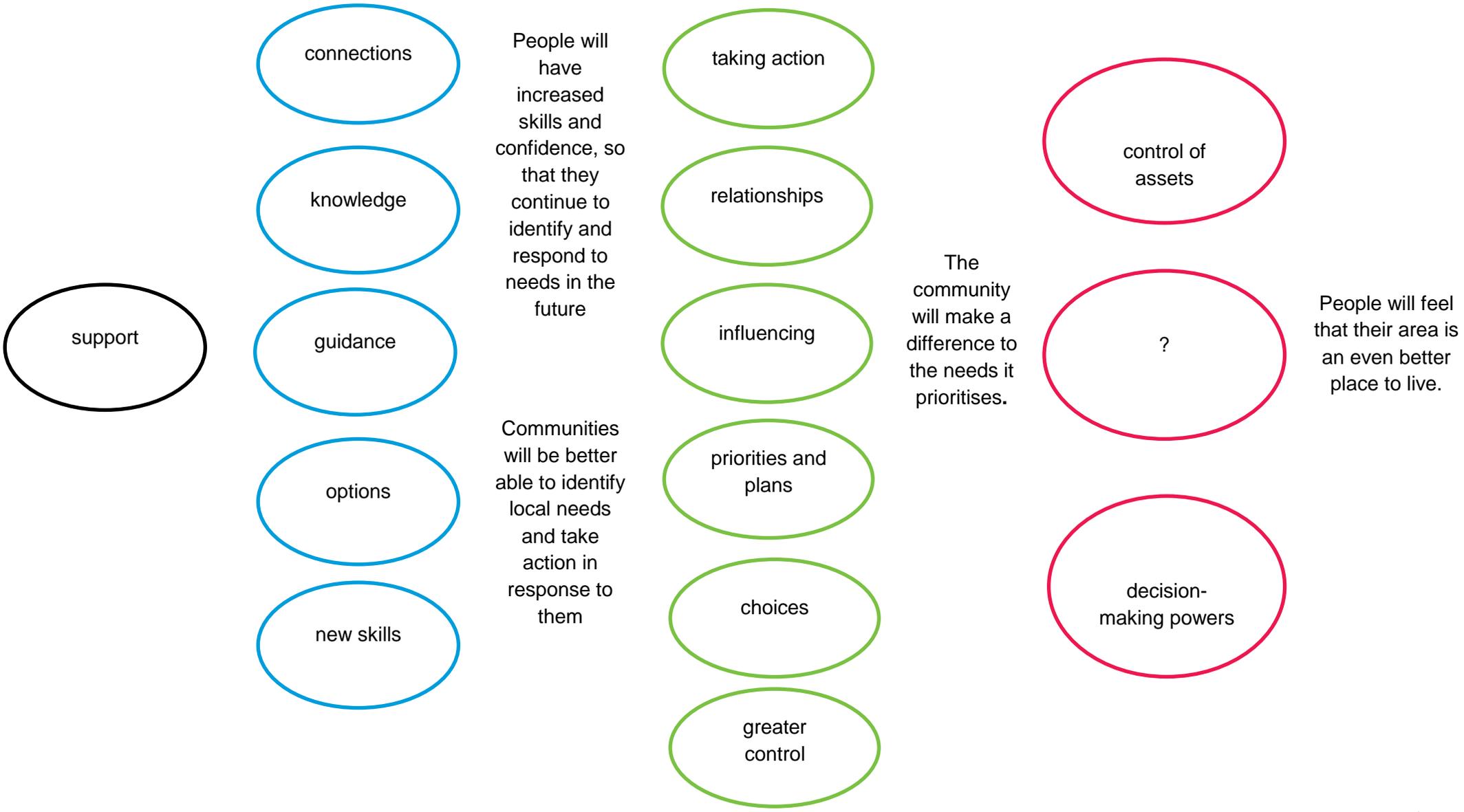**Residents having greater influence** - we may ask:

- what have people in Big Local areas been able to do so far? What has this achieved?
- what else has helped or hindered progress?
- have new relationships been established? With whom? What have these achieved?
- do Big Local residents feel they have access to more information or people that make decisions?
- do Big Local residents feel they can have an influence over issues that affect them and their area?

Next steps…

Over the next year Local Trust is working with research partners, Community Development Foundation (CDF) and Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) to expand on this theory of change to include an outcomes framework to support further evaluation and learning work. We will also continue to report on the progress of Big Local against the 4 programme outcomes and the intermediate outcomes described here.
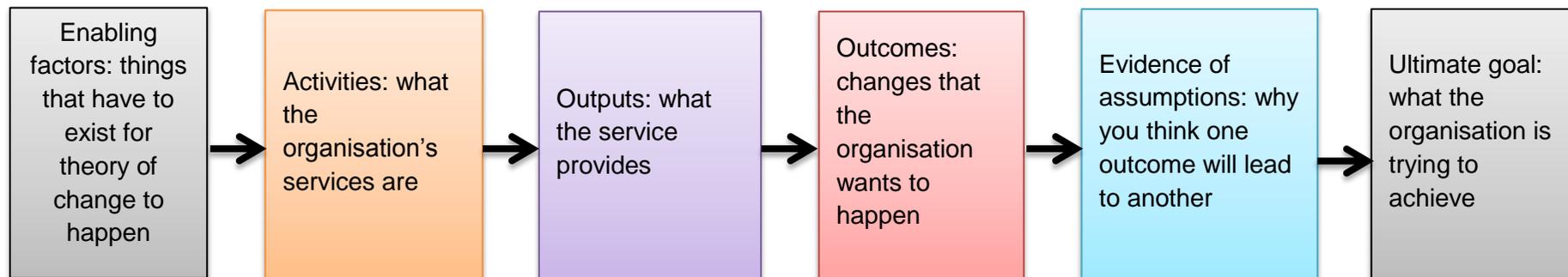
Please check our website for regular news and updates on Big Local learning.

Local Trust | Big Local theory of change

support

connections

knowledge

guidance

options

new skills

People will have increased skills and confidence, so that they continue to identify and respond to needs in the future

Communities will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them

taking action

relationships

influencing

priorities and plans

choices

greater control

The community will make a difference to the needs it prioritises.

control of assets

?

decision-making powers

People will feel that their area is an even better place to live.

Appendix 1: New Philanthropy Capital's theory of change process – logic chain

Source: Kail, Lumley, Theory of Change, New Philanthropy Capital, 10th April 2012, page 4. Found at
http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/theory-of-change/

| Enabling factors: things that have to exist for theory of change to happen | → | Activities: what the organisation's services are | → | Outputs: what the service provides | → | Outcomes: changes that the organisation wants to happen | → | Evidence of assumptions: why you think one outcome will lead to another | → | Ultimate goal: what the organisation is trying to achieve |

Local Trust

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The endowment for the Big Local programme is held by the Big Local Trust and overseen by Local Trust. The Big Local Trust was established by the Big Lottery Fund with a National Lottery grant of £196,873,499.

If you need this document in other formats or a community language please get in touch with Local Trust and we will help you.