

# Local Trust's response to the annual learning review of Big Local 2013-2014

The Institute for Voluntary Action Research's (IVAR) annual learning review, covering April 2013 to March 2014, highlights developments in Big Local that we can learn from. We use all of our learning proactively to build on successes, respond to challenges, and ensure we are able to support Big Local effectively in the future.

## The successes

### Progress in becoming resident-led

It is encouraging to see the progress that Big Local areas have made and fantastic to know that all 150 areas accessed funding during 2013-14. We are pleased that Big Local partnerships are becoming resident-led and that these residents feel supported to take control of decisions shaping the future of their area. It is encouraging that Big Local areas are choosing to tackle the things that matter most to them and are demonstrating a willingness to embrace complex challenges, so that they can make their areas even better places to live.

### Building sustainability

It is promising that many areas are planning to access, or accessing, match funding opportunities and in-kind support to strengthen what they want to achieve. Similarly, the review highlights developments that people are making in their understanding of fundraising techniques. Many steering groups and partnerships now have some understanding of social investment as an option. With our partners, we will continue to support both existing and new approaches to social investment, and will share our experiences to help others learn about the challenges and opportunities that this brings.

### Collaboration and expanding local networks

The review indicates that Big Local steering groups and partnerships are working successfully with local businesses, local authorities and charities to meet their shared aspirations. We hope that these relationships and networks will provide the foundations to help areas achieve their Big Local visions.

## Supporting Big Local areas

It is positive that 77% of Big Local areas took part in at least one Big Local learning event in 2013-14; we are also keen to support the 23% that did not. We realise that many people enjoy learning from each other, so we are seeking new ways to support peer-to-peer networks across the programme, including through:

- NANM networking and learning events
- local and sub-regional events organised by reps
- responding to bespoke area requests for support
- sharing ideas and experiences to provide inspiration through social media, blogs, case studies and our newsletter.



## Looking ahead: responding to emerging themes

### **Data**

The review highlighted some of the ways that we, and our partners, could refine our data collection methods. We are already exploring this, for example, how to distinguish match funding and in-kind support more effectively through our Big Local Community system. We are also exploring ways of identifying the impact that learning from events has over the longer term.

### **Transition**

We have already acknowledged that areas are making the transition from planning to delivery as we endorse Big Local plans. We are developing training with some new national partners to offer training to people in Big Local areas and help them develop skills related to the range of activities they are, and will be doing. We are also beginning to identify what kind of support areas might need once all of them have endorsed plans and partnerships, so that we help people make their areas even better places to live.

### **Resident-led**

We know that as Big Local partnerships move to delivery, they will also need a focus on community engagement beyond their partnerships on a regular basis, whilst ensuring that they make progress with implementing their plans. We expect partnerships to reflect on their progress and to make plans for the future during the annual review process. We are also aware that relationships between those involved will change over time; it will be helpful to consider and capture that.

### **Innovation and impact**

As time passes, it is important that we understand how those involved in each Big Local area are taking advantage of the opportunity that Big Local offers. We have already asked CDF (Community Development Foundation) to complete some primary research with some Big Local areas on their transition from planning to delivery, to understand more about this and ways we might support areas in the future.

Debbie Ladds, October 2014