

# Invitation to tender for dispute and conflict resolution in Big Local areas

July 2020

Local Trust, our partners and people in Big Local areas are passionate about what we're doing. We believe that Big Local has the potential to support residents to increase their skills and confidence and make a lasting difference to where they live while bringing them together to make their areas even better places in which to live. However we know that people don't always agree and that it's normal for groups to experience disagreement and conflict.

We are interested in working with organisations that can support the resolution of disputes and conflict between people and groups in Big Local areas. Since 2017 we have been working with specialist organisations that are able to support people involved in Big Local to resolve disputes and conflict locally. Following a review of our [processes for responding to complaints, concerns, and disputes in Big Local areas](#) – which places a greater emphasis on mediation where appropriate – and our greater understanding of how Big Local Partnerships engage with and benefit from mediation support, now is the right time to review these arrangements.

We are made aware of disputes and conflict through complaints and concerns raised with us directly from people working, volunteering or living in Big Local areas. In other situations we are made aware of disputes and/or conflict within a partnership or between the partnership and other Big Local stakeholders in the area through other routes than a formal complaint. Disputes might arise within a partnership (the group of people who guide the direction of Big Local in an area) or between those involved in a decision, process, approach or behaviours and may be about the activities and projects, the funding, a decision, or a process. We are sometimes approached to help resolve these disputes, asked to make a decision, or support a process on what should happen next. In certain cases it may be clear that some form of dispute resolution is needed without a full complaint review

When a formal complaint is raised about Big Local we follow our complaints procedure, and often this involves the Partnership reviewing and resolving the complaint locally. Sometimes the review concludes that the individual(s) from the partnership or locally trusted organisation have not acted in line with our expectations, in which case we expect appropriate action to resolve the issue and prevent it arising in the future. However, to date the majority of conclusions are that the complaint is about a difference of opinion, which has no right or wrong answer and is actually a dispute or conflict between individuals or groups.

Each Big Local area has a [Big Local partnership](#), a [locally trusted organisation](#), an endorsed [Big Local plan](#), a [Local Trust rep](#), and in most cases locally agreed processes and procedures that guide how they operate. Where appropriate we ask areas to resolve disputes or conflicts with those who are directly involved and through the locally agreed processes, involving the relevant stakeholders and in reference to the plan where needed (for example, a complaint about the type of work being funded by Big Local in that area). In some cases the partnership need external support to resolve the differences of opinion and enable individuals to work together constructively. Therefore dispute resolution support could be the result of a complaint review, or requested by the partnership, rep, or Local Trust.

## Dispute resolution support

We envisage appointing and working with a provider or providers<sup>1</sup> that will deliver support across the programme to support us and those we work with. The aim of the support is not to review any complaints or concerns, or make a decision of which point of view is 'correct', but to allow those involved to come to some form of agreement to move on from the dispute or conflict. The contractor will need to understand the background to the dispute and suggest an appropriate way forward; this is likely to be mediation or another form of facilitated conversation, but we would be open to other suggestions on a case by case basis.

We expect contractors to stay in close contact with Local Trust throughout as the resolution process may be running alongside other activities, such as a complaint review, and we need to ensure we are abreast of any developments. We also require the contractor to provide an overview of the issue, discussions and any agreements for our information, which we will share with the Local Trust rep in the area to monitor going forward.

The successful contractors will need to understand Big Local, our values, ethos and approach to creating resident-led change. We need high quality and appropriate support, as well as a passion and commitment to our work. More information on Local Trust and Big Local can be accessed here: [www.localtrust.org.uk](http://www.localtrust.org.uk)

## About Local Trust and Big Local

Local Trust was established in 2012 to deliver Big Local, a National Lottery Community Fund-funded programme which committed £1m each to 150 neighbourhoods across England. The £217m originally provided by The National Lottery Community Fund to support this programme is the largest single-purpose Lottery-funded endowment ever made, and the biggest ever investment by a non-state funder in place-based, resident-led change.

In terms of scale, time horizon and ethos, nothing like Big Local has ever existed. Designed from the outset to be radically different from other funding programmes, at the heart of Big Local is a vision of empowered, resilient, dynamic, asset-rich communities making their own decisions on what is best for their area.

Big Local is an exciting opportunity for residents in 150 areas around England to use at least £1m each to make a lasting positive difference to their communities. Big Local 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.

The outcomes for Big Local are:

1. Communities will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them.
2. People will have increased skills and confidence, so that they continue to identify and respond to needs in the future.
3. The community will make a difference to the needs it prioritises.
4. People will feel that their area is an even better place to live.

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<sup>1</sup> We are open to working with a range of providers who take different approaches to mediation, have experience of different types of disputes, or bring different skills. However we would expect all providers we work with to provide coverage across England.

## Support available for Big Local areas

We are eager that this support complements the support already available to Big Local areas, and for clarity we have outlined the programme support available to Big Local areas below.

Local Trust is the name of the organisation that is managing Big Local. Local Trust has a team of people who manage the funding to Big Local areas as well as a range of support to areas to use this funding in line with the Big Local outcomes.

Each Big Local area is allocated a Local Trust rep. The rep's role is to act as a critical friend to Big Local partnerships, and act as Local Trust's eyes, ears and voice in the area. They help to make sure that a Big Local partnership is in place, that there is a clear plan and that the plan is delivered. Reps are contractors managed by Local Trust.

A locally trusted organisation is the organisation nominated and endorsed by people in a Big Local area or the partnership, to administer and account for funding, and/or deliver activities or services on behalf of a partnership of residents. Areas might work with more than one locally trusted organisation depending on their plan and the skills and resources required.

Throughout each year Local Trust, with partners, run a series of learning and networking events and training courses for people in areas. We believe that this supports the development of skills and enables the sharing of knowledge and examples, creating a culture of learning across Big Local and introducing ideas from other organisations into the programme.

We believe that a community and resident led approach to creating lasting change:

- develops the skills and confidence of the people involved and enables them to work with others to the benefit of their community;
- builds on the opportunities and assets available in each community;
- creates lasting, long term solutions.

## Commissioning process

The tender process allows us to identify a range of potential contractors, and we invite any interested contractors to submit tenders for this work. We will assess the tenders and shortlist a selection which we will explore further, potentially through an invitation to present their proposal to us at interview. We intend to confirm contractors in April 2020. Ideally the successful contractors will need to have the capacity to start working with us from April 2020; if this is not the case please note this in your proposal with an indication of when you would be available from. We may appoint more than one provider if we feel they offer a different set of skills and experience that is relevant to the Big Local context.

Contracts will be awarded based on the extent to which the proposal:

1. chimes with our aspirations for this support (as articulated in this document);
2. demonstrates your experience of dispute resolution in a community setting;
3. demonstrates the capacity to deliver on the contract;
4. delivers what is needed and appropriate;
5. fits the ethos of Big Local: resident driven, transforms areas, increases skills, open, inclusive;
6. offers value for money (we are not bound to accept the cheapest proposal);
7. fits and develops our existing support to Big Local areas.

## Independent support

Given the nature of this work we need to avoid conflicts of interest and ensure the objectivity and independence of the individuals and/or organisations delivering it. Therefore bidders affected by any of the below criteria need to declare it in their proposal:

- Are currently or have previously been contracted by a Big Local partnership, or their LTO on behalf of the partnership;
- Are in receipt of direct funding (in any form) from a Big Local area<sup>2</sup>, or have been previously;
- Have worked closely with a Big Local area as a support partner, rep, trainer or other support offer;
- An organisation or individual that has carried out assessments, area reviews or other forms of work that involved direct contact with Big Local area(s);
- Any other relationship with a Big Local area, partnership members or other close stakeholder that may impact on impartiality or independence.

Where bidders have previously worked directly with a Big Local area or areas (whether funded by the area or Local Trust), each area should be listed in the tender using their Big Local name.

## Budget and timeline

The volume of work is dependent on the number of disputes we are alerted to, and will be on an as-needed basis. Over the past three years we have seen an average of around three disputes per year, but this number may increase as a result of our revised complaints process. The contract will be for three years, with an annual review of learning from what has worked or not worked.

We are interested in seeing your estimate of approximately how much each dispute may cost, recognising that each situation will require a tailored response. Disputes usually involve review of a complaint and/or any supporting material; conversations with each of the individuals involved and other stakeholders (such as the rep or partnership Chair); agreeing a plan for the dispute resolution with us and the partnership; meetings with the parties involved to conduct the resolution; and a short write up of the dispute, the resolution process, and any agreed steps to be taken.

Although there are no fixed timelines for completion of the process, we would expect an agreement of the process and to have a date agreed for the first meeting within 4 weeks of us notifying the contractor of the conflict.

## Submission of tenders

Providers submitting a tender should include the following:

1. An overview of your organisation and the key staff involved. This should include previous relevant experience of delivering similar support, including whether you have worked on projects of a similar size, scope and purpose to Big Local. Include any knowledge or experience of resident-led activity, the voluntary and community sector and community development.
2. Summary CVs of those who would lead the support.
3. Your understanding of what is required under the brief.

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<sup>2</sup> “Big Local area” in this instance would include the partnership, LTO, and any organisations or individuals delivering, co-delivering or supporting the Big Local programme locally.

4. Details of how you would deliver, manage and report on the contract, including the methods you would adopt during dispute resolution and why.
5. A brief explanation of your proposed approach where social distancing and/or lockdown regulations are in force, and any experience you have of carrying out this type of work in these conditions
6. Any other relevant information that will assist us in our decision, including the added value that you could bring to Big Local and Local Trust.
7. An estimate budget and breakdown of costs per dispute.
8. The contact details, including email address, of the person leading the application process from your organisation or partnership.
9. Two referees from previous similar work.

Please declare any potential conflicts of interest, including whether or not you are in receipt of Big Local funding either directly or indirectly.

Tenders should be no longer than eight pages, excluding CVs which can be added as appendices.

## Timeline

Responses to the tender should be clearly marked “Dispute resolution in Big Local” and be submitted by email on or before 10am (UK time) on 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 to: [programmes@localtrust.org.uk](mailto:programmes@localtrust.org.uk).

The selected contractor(s) will be invited to an induction workshop following signature of the contract to learn more about the Big Local programme, Big Local partnerships, and our experience of disputes and conflicts within Big Local. We will cover the cost for this at the agreed day rate for up to two people from each contractor, and agree the date mutually between all attendees.