

The Local Network Fund for
Children and Young People

Evaluation Report

FINAL REPORT

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SUMMARY

In May 2007 Nottinghamshire Community Foundation [NCF] commissioned an evaluation of the Local Network Fund for Children and Young People [LNF] from independent consultants **mtl**. This report is the outcome of that study and is based on a survey of 379 [a response rate of 58%] LNF grant recipients and interviews with NCF staff, Grant Panel members, Outreach Workers and members of the Strategic Partnership for Children, Young People and Families.

Context

The LNF underpins the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Plans [CYPPs] and the first Block of Local Area Agreements which concern children and young people [CYP] and is therefore an important element of the Every Child Matters [ECM] strategy and the reform programme underpinned by the Children's Act 2004.

Children's Trusts are being created to promote inter-agency cooperation amongst local authorities and other partners to improve the well-being of CYP in accordance with CYPPs and LAAs. In this context the strategic planning of services for CYP is being led by two partnerships: Nottingham Strategic Partnership for Children, Young people and families; and Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnerships.

The Local Network Fund

The LNF improves outcomes and opportunities for Children and Young People aged 0-19 through grassroots community and voluntary groups. This national programme commenced in May 2001 and will end in March 2008 at the same time as the Children's Fund. LNF applications are for between £250 and £7,000 and must be in accordance with specific eligibility criteria and correspond to one of the ECM themes: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.

Nottinghamshire Community Foundation have acted as the local delivery agent for the Fund from its outset to completion. A total investment of £5.8m has been made in 1,096 grassroots activities and projects giving an average LNF grant of almost £5,300.

Key Messages from the Evaluation

The five strategic outcomes of the ECM strategy¹, together with other priorities, should be addressed at a local level through the delivery and monitoring of Children and Young People Plan's and the CYP Block of Local Area Agreement's. The LNF was launched prior to these strategic developments but has been successfully adapted to respond to them.

A diverse range of projects, schemes and groups has been funded which have contributed to ECM outcomes and the strategic priorities identified in the City and County Children and Young People's Plans and Local Area Agreements.

¹ ECM outcomes: Be Healthy; Stay Safe; Enjoy and Achieve; Make a Positive Contribution; and Achieve Economic Well-Being.

Many CYP have benefited from the activities supported, particularly in relation to the following priority areas:

- Be Healthy:
 - ▶ Promoted healthy eating and physical activity.
 - ▶ Improved emotional well-being.
- Stay Safe:
 - ▶ Reduced incidents of bullying and victimisation.
 - ▶ Reduced involvement in criminal and anti-social activities.
- Enjoy and Achieve:
 - ▶ Increased access to a range of educational activities.
 - ▶ Increased the range of curriculum opportunities available to CYP.
 - ▶ Increased the educational achievement of pupils aged 11 to 16 years.
- Make a Positive Contribution:
 - ▶ Promoted and increased levels of socially acceptable behaviour.
 - ▶ Increased participation in out-of-school learning and community-based activities.
- Achieve Economic Well-Being:
 - ▶ Increased participation and achievement of CYP in work, education or training.

CYP have also benefited directly from their own engagement in LNF-funded projects, especially in terms of developing ideas, delivering and taking part in activities and assessing their value to themselves, other CYP and to families. Their involvement in and influence on the grant assessment process has been more limited however; earlier this year a Young People's Panel operating in Nottingham began to assess LNF applications on an equal footing with the NCF Panel but this development, though welcome, is rather belated.

LNF funding and associated support has made a positive contribution to many small voluntary, community and self-help groups on four fronts:

- Activities have been extended to enable them to be accessed by more CYP, especially those in priority groups. The quality of services have also been enhanced.
- The sustainability of many groups has been enhanced, at least in the short term, and the confidence and skills of volunteers and CYP involved in the projects has increased.
- In some instances groups have been able to 'lever in' additional income [eg other grants or sponsorship] from other sources or, more usually, goodwill and volunteer help from within local communities.
- The Fund has helped raise awareness of child protection issues amongst local groups – a safeguarding/ child protection policy is needed as a condition of funding in all cases with support available to produce or update a policy where required, including training courses organized by NCF.

Outreach work and NCF networks have enabled funds to be targeted at priority groups, such as those representing BME communities and disabled people, as well as groups operating in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in remote rural areas and the inner city. This has been a challenging task addressed over a number of years and although there has been success it is acknowledged that even greater VCS 'market penetration' could have been achieved with more resources and greater local influence over promotional activities and branding.

Nottinghamshire NCF have proved to be an exemplary delivery agent for the LNF: local, knowledgeable, independent and reliable. They are widely regarded as being a 'safe pair of hands' in managing the Fund, efficient administrators and accountable to their key stakeholders. The monitoring of activities has been good, although there have been times when back-logs have developed in terms of inputting information from End of Grant forms on the national LNF database. NCF's added value has gone beyond fund administration to embrace elements of group capacity and confidence building with Outreach Workers also playing a valuable role in this regard.

The NCF Grant Panel process has worked well and ensured that decision-making is always open and 'above board' and seen to be so. It has also provided an opportunity for local people and CYP experts to contribute to the process and, in turn, benefit from it through networking and awareness-raising. The experience and skills of Panel members has been a key factor in enabling the Fund to be responsive to local needs and priorities. Panel members have been properly informed of their duties and responsibilities, the criteria associated with LNF and other grant schemes and documentation relating to applications. Some Panel members would welcome the opportunity to meet LNF Outreach Workers and discuss their work and receive more feedback about the progress of projects.

LNF Nottinghamshire has demonstrated how relatively small amounts of grant can go a long way and make a big difference to small, embryonic and highly localised groups. Most of this additional activity could not have been achieved without LNF funding or if it had it may have been delayed and/or scaled down.

Although few groups experienced significant difficulties with the LNF grant application and monitoring process – simplifying paperwork, producing more succinct guidance and more accessible information about the status of grant applications were identified as areas for improvement. Similarly, although the Fund is widely acknowledged to be quite inclusive, many groups would like to go further by, for example, broadening or relaxing criteria particularly in relation to items and activities which LNF will/not fund.

It seems reasonable to conclude therefore that although the LNF funding model has been remarkably accessible and responsive to the community sector and has operated with minimal bureaucracy, a locally managed and delivered Fund would allow for greater flexibility and improved targeting.

The LNF has been very positively received and applied by many groups supporting CYP across the City and County and its demise will be a huge loss to the sector at a time when the Children's Fund is also coming to an end and other sources of small scale grant funding are becoming increasingly scarce. The LNF has filled a funding gap in provision which may rapidly reappear beyond March 2008 when both it and the Children's Fund come to an end.

Decisions regarding the future allocation of funding to support CYP, and the role of the VCS in such arrangements and activities, lie with the emerging Children's Trusts and the two strategic partnerships which are bringing them into being – Nottingham Strategic Partnership for Children, Young people and Families [SPCYPF] and Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership [CYPSP].

Recommendation

The LNF has demonstrated the need for, and value of, supporting frontline community groups who make an important contribution to the social economy and NCF have been an independent and highly effective fund manager.

As the development of Children's Trusts gathers momentum funders must acknowledge that a discrete grant-making mechanism along the lines of LNF can complement and enhance the commissioning-based approach. Moreover, a locally managed Fund would offer considerable scope for improving upon the successful LNF through increased flexibility, discretion and targeting at the grassroots level.

We therefore recommend that the two strategic partnerships for CYP give consideration to the development of a new CYP small grants programme for Nottinghamshire to become operational in April 2008 when the LNF and Children's Fund expire. A successor fund might broaden its scope to embrace the target groups of both these funds [ie all CYP from birth to 19] and/or make modifications to promotional or outreach activities, targeting, the size of awards and documentation. These and other issues require consultation and consideration amongst key stakeholders leading to the development of a fund specification for more formal consideration by both partnerships early in the new year.

I. STUDY PURPOSE AND APPROACH

Evaluation Aims

- I.1 In May 2007 Nottinghamshire Community Foundation [NCF] commissioned an evaluation of the Local Network Fund [LNF] from independent consultants **mtl**. This report is the outcome of that study. The brief for this assignment specifies the following three aims:
- Assess the impact the LNF has made across Nottinghamshire - on children, young people, families and the organisations working with them - and account for the factors influencing engagement and performance.
 - Evaluate the fitness for purpose and effectiveness of the local administration and management arrangements for the delivery of the fund on the part of NCF.
 - Demonstrate how the outcomes achieved by the LNF could be used to deliver against the emerging priorities and themes of Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Council Local Area Agreements 2006 - 2009.
- I.2 The primary output from the study should be “an evidence-based report on both the quantitative and qualitative impact of the LNF within communities across Nottinghamshire”.
- I.3 Susan Brown and Lee Broughton managed the study on behalf of NCF; Clive La Court led the **mtl** team.

Activities

- I.4 The study aims were addressed by completing a series of activities between May and September 2007; these were:
- An inception and planning meeting.
 - Preparatory work.
 - A postal/email survey of LNF grant recipients: 379 community groups responded to the survey which was issued to 655 groups in total [58% response rate].
 - Key consultations with NCF management and staff, LNF Outreach Workers, selected members of LNF Grant Panels and the Strategic Partnership for Children, Young People and Families.
- I.5 An additional stage of work involving the preparation of 10 case studies is to be completed during September and will be reported separately.

Structure of the Report

- I.6 This report is structured as follows:
- Section 3 provides an overview of the strategic/policy context relevant to the study.
 - Section 4 describes what the LNF is for and how it operates in Nottinghamshire.
 - Section 5 sets out an analysis of the findings from the survey of LNF grant recipients.
 - Section 6 summarises key issues arising from the key consultations undertaken.
 - Section 7 sets out key findings and recommendations.

2. POLICY AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Introduction

2.1 This section reviews the policy and strategic context relevant to the study.

Every Child Matters

2.2 The Government's 'Every Child Matters' [ECM] strategy is the policy framework which details the overall approach to the well-being of children and young people [CYP] from birth to age 19. Its aim is to enable communities to develop projects and activities for children and young people with limited opportunities or access to services that many young people already enjoy.

2.3 The strategy proposes five strategic outcomes that are universal ambitions for every child and young person, whatever their background or circumstances; these are:

- Be healthy – activities that promote a healthy lifestyle so that CYP are able to enjoy good health.
- Stay safe – activities that contribute towards CYP being protected from harm and neglect and growing up able to look after themselves.
- Enjoy and achieve – activities that help CYP maximize their potential and develop skills for adulthood.
- Make a positive contribution – activities which enable CYP to use their skills and abilities in ways to enhance their own lives and the lives of their community.
- Achieve economic well-being – activities which help CYP to express their opinions and achieve their full potential in life.

2.4 These five outcomes should guide and help prioritise all services and activities focused on supporting CYP, including those funded via the LNF.

Children and Young People's Plans

2.5 The Children and Young People's Plan [CYPP] is an important element of the ECM strategy and the reform programme underpinned by the Children's Act 2004. On the basis of a new statutory duty local authorities and their partners are required to produce this single, strategic, overarching plan for all services affecting children and young people. The first CYPPs were required to be in place by 1st April 2006 and they should be subject to an annual review. The duration of such plans may vary but a period of three years gives a good basis for medium to long term commissioning, reflected in provider agreements and contracts.

2.6 Regulations require the CYPP to cover:

- A local vision for children and young people.
- An assessment of needs in relation to the outcomes.
- Priorities and key actions planned to achieve the outcomes.
- Improvements which the local authority and their partners intend to make during the plan period to help achieve the ECM outcomes.

- A statement of how resources will be deployed to achieve the outcomes.
 - An explanation of how the plan relates to arrangements for performance management and review of services.
 - The arrangements for cooperation and partnership-working.
 - An explanation of how the CYPP is consistent with the strategic plans of partners such as PCTs, LSCs, Connexions, the Probation Service and police authorities.
- 2.7 Each local authority is expected to produce the CYPP in conjunction with their local Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.
- 2.8 Progress towards achieving the stated strategic aims and outcomes is informed by Joint Area Reviews undertaken by independent inspection teams led by the Audit Commission.
- 2.9 Nottingham City CYPP 2006 - 2009² sets out the following 9 emerging priorities for improving outcomes for children and young people:
- Reduce teenage conceptions.
 - Reduce substance misuse.
 - Reduce the rate of infant mortality and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.
 - Improve the mental and physical health outcomes for CYP, with a particular focus on priority groups and increased access to sport and leisure opportunities.
 - Ensure that all children are safeguarded.
 - Raise educational attainment, particularly for priority groups.
 - Ensure that CYP are more engaged in education and learning.
 - Reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training [NEET], particularly in priority groups.
 - Provide support to parents to enable their children to maximize their potential.
- 2.10 Priority groups include: Black City boys; looked after children and young people; children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities; Gypsies and Travellers; refugee and asylum seekers; young offenders; and teenage mothers.
- 2.11 The Nottinghamshire CYPP 2007 – 2009³ addresses the following 6 priorities:
- Work together to promote the welfare of all CYP in Nottinghamshire and to keep them safe.
 - Enhance partnership-working by developing a coherent framework to engage all partners in order to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people.
 - Improve services and outcomes for vulnerable groups of children and young people.
 - Ensure the active participation of CYP and their families in shaping the design and delivery of services.

² www.nottinghamics.org.uk

³ <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/changeforchildren>

- Improve the attainment and achievement of all CYP, including targeted action to improve outcomes for low achieving groups.
- Facilitate a range of early interventions and preventative actions to achieve optimum outcomes for CYP and their families.

Children's Trusts

- 2.12 Children's Trusts are being created to address the fragmentation of responsibilities for children's services.
- 2.13 The essential features of a children's trust are:
- A child-centred outcome-led vision.
 - Integrated front line delivery.
 - Integrated processes.
 - Integrated strategy – joint planning and commissioning.
 - Inter-agency governance.
- 2.14 Children's Trusts put improved outcomes for CYP at the centre of all this activity since they promote inter-agency cooperation amongst local authorities and their partners to improve the well-being of CYP.
- 2.15 They build upon, bring together and formalise the joint work that is taking place in many local areas in fields such as education, health, social and care, recreation and other services. The Trusts bring together all services for CYP in an area, underpinned by the Children Act 2004 duty to cooperate and focus on improving outcomes for all CYP. They are based on common principles, but local flexibility is encouraged in order to respond to local needs and opportunities.
- 2.16 Children's Trusts are being supported by integrated processes, some of which [eg the Common Assessment Framework] will be centrally driven, whereas others will be specified at a local level. Joint commissioning, underpinned by pooled resources, should ensure that those best able to provide the right package of services can do so.
- 2.17 In order to help further progress the achievement of aims and targets in the CYPP, all local authorities are expected to be working with partners through children's Trusts, or equivalent arrangements, by April 2008.
- 2.18 In both the City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire two strategic partnerships are involved in developing proposals for children's Trusts and equivalent arrangements, these are:
- Nottingham Strategic Partnership for Children, Young People and Families [SPCYPF].
 - Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership [CYPSP].
- 2.19 The SPCYPF coordinates the planning of children's and family services across Nottingham City. The partnership has specific responsibility for the CYP Block of the LAA and for monitoring performance against the targets set out in the Education Floor Target Action Plan.

- 2.20 The objectives of the partnership are to:
- Coordinate the overall strategic development for integrating services for CYP and their families.
 - Secure the most efficient use of resources.
 - Develop good practice to provide a basis for effective coordination and integration of services to CYP and their families.
 - Coordinate service planning for vulnerable CYP.
- 2.21 The CYPP is the key driver for the Joint Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Families [JCF] and the Joint Commissioning Strategy agreed by a CYPSP. In Nottingham the 3 key strategic aims of the JCF are:
- Services for looked after children.
 - Locally-based services for vulnerable children and families.
 - Services for children with additional need, including special educational needs, disabilities and behavioural issues.
- 2.22 The CYPSP oversees the Change for Children programme which underpins the CYP Block of the County's LAA. It includes an executive group consisting of key partners with explicit links to each of the children and young people's groups within each Local Strategic Partnership [LSP] across Nottinghamshire.
- 2.23 It is anticipated that there will be two children's Trusts, one for the City of Nottingham and the other for the rest of the County with equivalent arrangements at District and Borough levels but the details of organisation and governance arrangements have still to be agreed.

Local Area Agreements

- 2.24 Local Area Agreements [LAAs] set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government, a local area [the local authority and LSP] and other key partners. The agreement is intended to deliver a better quality of life for people in the area through improving performance on a range of national and local priorities. These priorities are grouped around four blocks: Children and Young People; Safer and Stronger Communities; Healthier Communities and Older People; and Economic Development and Enterprise.
- 2.25 The key elements of LAAs are:
- A definition of outcomes.
 - A list of indicators and targets for each outcome, including reward targets formerly known as local public service agreements.
 - Enabling measures, formerly know as freedoms and flexibilities.
 - Funding streams that contribute to each outcome – these can either be pooled or aligned.
- 2.26 LAAs support and can give added impetus to the ECM agenda, with children's Trusts as the main driver for the first block. Local authorities should ensure that LAAs are in line with the development of the CYPP and that the priorities identified in the CYPP are reflected in the LAA.

- 2.27 Nottingham’s LAA can be found at: www.gnpartnership.org.uk/documents/laas. Outcomes and priorities agreed for the Children and Young People’s Block are set out in Appendix A of this report.
- 2.28 Nottinghamshire’s LAA can be found at: www.nottinghamshirepartnership.org.uk/index/laa. Outcomes and priorities agreed for the Children and Young People’s Block are set out in Appendix B of this report. The survey of LNF grant recipients [reported in section 3 below] identifies the specific contribution of LNF-funded activities to the these LAA priorities.

Strategic Positioning of the LNF

- 2.29 The following table illustrates the strategic positioning of the LNF in relation to the Community and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, LAA Themes and the priorities agreed between central and local government.

Community and Neighborhood Renewal Strategy Aims	Local Area Agreement Themes	Central and Local Priorities	LNF and Every Child Matters Themes
Choose Nottingham	Economic and development enterprise	Sustainable communities	Achieving Economic Wellbeing
Respect for Nottingham	Safer and stronger communities	Safer and stronger communities	Staying Safe
Young Nottingham	Children and young people	Children and young people	Making a Contribution Enjoying and Achieving
Active and healthy Nottingham	Healthier communities and older people	Healthier communities	Being Healthy
Transforming Nottingham’s Neighbourhoods	Safer and stronger communities	Sustainable communities	Staying Safe
Excellence through partnerships	LAA delivery	Central-local priorities delivery	Making a Contribution

Source: http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/lc_nottinghamlaa-3.pdf

The Children’s Fund

- 2.30 The other key funding programme which has operated alongside the LNF in recent years is the Children’s Fund which is aimed at reducing child poverty. This supports a range of projects and activities aimed at children aged 5 to 13 with particular emphasis on early intervention and preventative measures to achieve the 5 ECM outcomes.
- 2.31 Nottingham City Children’s Fund is managed by the Children’s Fund Team who are based in Nottingham City Council Social Services Department. The Children’s Fund Team do this work on behalf of the NSPCYP.

- 2.32 The Nottinghamshire Children's Fund is a multi-agency partnership whose accountable body is Nottinghamshire County Council Social Services Department where the Children's Fund Team is based. The lead agency for the Fund is Networking Action for Voluntary Organisations [NAVO] who host the Families and Children's Forum – a partnership of over 400 groups who work with children and families across the County and City. The CYPSP has overall strategic responsibility for the Children's Fund.

3. THE LOCAL NETWORK FUND

Introduction

- 3.1 This section states the aims and objectives of the LNF and describes the arrangements for its management and coordination within Nottinghamshire.

Aims

- 3.2 The LNF improves outcomes and opportunities for children and young people [CYP] aged 0-19 through grassroots community and voluntary groups. The programme was funded by the Department for Education and Skills⁴ and commenced in May 2001, it will end in March 2008. The programme has 4 strategic aims:
- Reduce under-achievement and the overall effects of child poverty, by raising the aspirations of CYP.
 - Ensure funding reaches those groups best able to provide local solutions to child poverty – particularly those small grass-roots organizations operating in the poorest communities. Through these groups, the fund aims to enable communities to help themselves.
 - Reach out to those CYP most in need and who have trouble accessing services.
 - Help CYP to express their own views.
- 3.3 LNF applications are invited under the 5 ECM themes: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.
- 3.4 Grants are available for between £250 and £7,000 and most are for one year or less; however, provision is available for two-year funding up to £12,000 in total.

Fund Management and Administration

- 3.5 The Community Foundation Network was initially appointed to manage and administer the fund nationally and to provide an experienced fund administrator in each Local Network area. From April 2003, the LNF central administration was managed in-house by the DfES.
- 3.6 NCF has acted as the accountable body and local delivery team for the LNF in Nottinghamshire since April 2001. NCF is an independent charity which specialises in making small grants to grassroots voluntary and community groups, particularly groups that find it difficult to access funding from alternative sources because they are too small, too local or too inexperienced at fund raising. As well as managing grant making programmes for Government and other Charitable Trusts, the Foundation also works with donors wishing to support local community activity. NCF is working to build a substantial endowment fund, which, in the long term, will be the Foundation's sustainable source of income in perpetuity. In terms of the Foundation's development, the LNF has been instrumental in the organisation's development, giving it a significant profile across Nottinghamshire. It is important to emphasise, however, that the discontinuation of the LNF would in no way affect the continued viability of the NCF which is responsible for administering a number of similar funds.

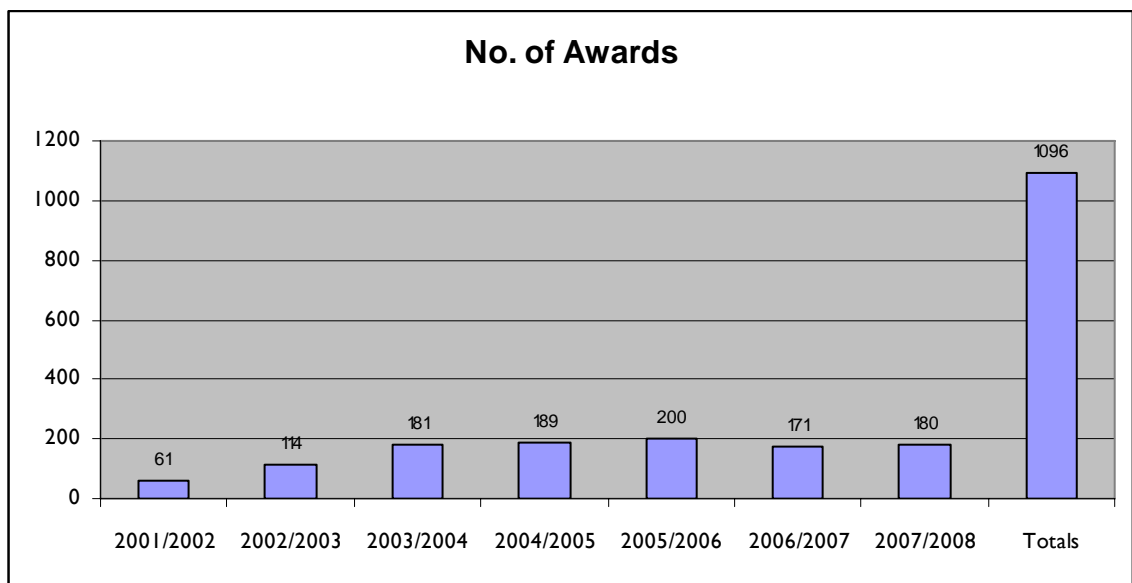
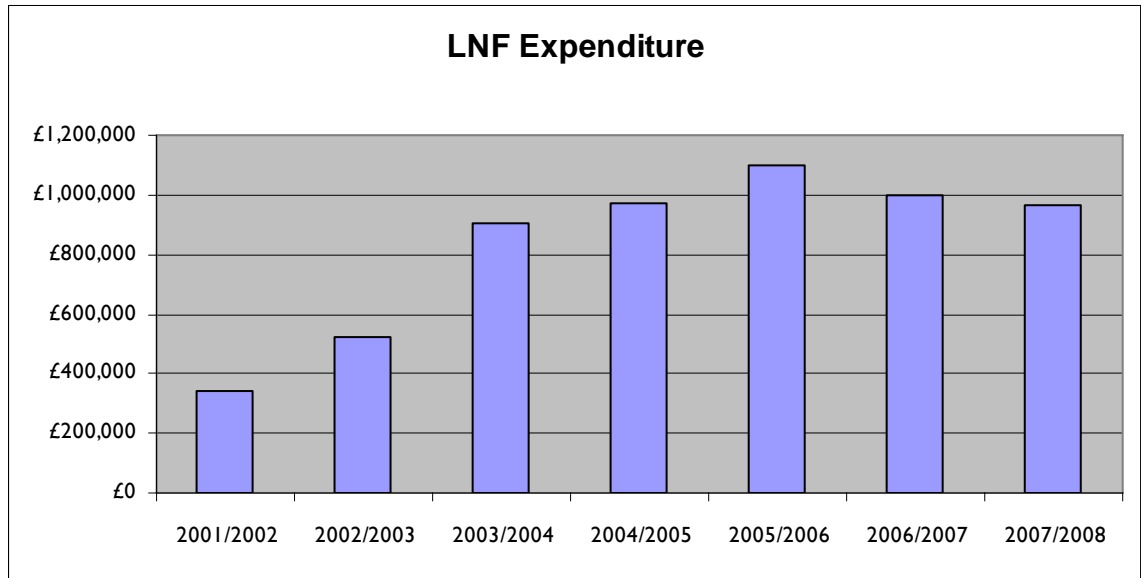
⁴ The responsible department is now the Department for Children, Schools and Families

Application and Appraisal Process

- 3.7 Groups wanting to apply for funding must approach the LNF National Call Centre which dispatches application forms and guidelines.
- 3.8 The LNF eligibility criteria are as follows:
- The applicant must be based and provide services in England.
 - The group need to be a locally managed small voluntary, community or self-help group.
 - Most of the CYP benefiting from a proposed activity will have limited opportunities or access to services that many young people take for granted.
 - Activities must focus on CYP aged 0 – 19, or up to 25 with learning disabilities.
 - Activities should aim to give CYP the opportunity to express their opinions.
 - The group must have volunteers that are not part of their management committee.
- 3.9 Outreach support has been commissioned by NCF to ensure that groups that might not normally apply for funding are offered an opportunity to do so. Advice and support is also available to groups for project development, establishing and running community projects and developing safeguarding procedures. In addition to the outreach team, NCF Grants Officers are able to offer information about the application process and best practice.
- 3.10 Completed applications are initially assessed by a NCF Grants Officer using an assessment checklist and applicants are contacted directly if additional information is required or if they do not meet the eligibility criteria. If eligible and complete, applications are forwarded for consideration by the NCF Grants Panel which is the primary body through which applications for funding to the NCF are assessed. The Panel is made up of volunteers and experts on a variety of issues [including CYP] and who have substantial local knowledge of communities and the VCS in Nottinghamshire. NCF can call on a pool of around 70 individuals to participate in Panel meetings all of whom have been inducted and supported by NCF.
- 3.11 Applications pertaining to inner Nottingham [particularly Area 4] are also assessed by a Young Person's Panel which was recently developed in cooperation with the Partnership Council; this Panel meets on a monthly basis and has equal status to the aforementioned Grants Panel.
- 3.12 Applicants are notified of Panel decisions within 10 weeks of receipt of the completed application. If unsuccessful, groups are provided with feedback and encouraged to access the support service with a view to reapplying if appropriate. If successful, award letters and conditions of grants are issued by NCF, and payments made on receipt of a signed undertaking to agree to the terms of grant.
- 3.13 NCF are contracted to undertake monitoring visits with 15% of all LNF grant recipient groups. All grant recipients are required to complete and submit an End of Grant Form to NCF 6 weeks after the project has been completed.

LNf Funding

3.14 The following graphs show annual LNf expenditure and grant awards over 2001-02 and 2007-08 in Nottinghamshire. A total investment of £5,807,177 has been made in 1,096 grassroots activities and projects giving an average grant of almost £5,300.



Recent Awards 2006 - 07

- 3.15 Over the financial year 2006 – 07, NCF originally profiled £770,966 and received an additional £88,000 from DfES, making a total grant spend of £859,065. Interest exceeded grant funding available with over £89,250 worth of applications being rolled forward into the next financial year 2007 - 08. LNF made a total of 171 grant awards, including four 2 year grants. The average grant award was £5230.
- 3.16 The range of groups applying and funded activities remained diverse. Sports activities include tennis, badminton, swimming, basketball, hockey, diving, football and cricket. Music, dance, art and drama are strong themes that clearly engage CYP; LNF have funded traditional bands, film and music production workshops and drama groups. One stronger element last year was projects focusing on health, particularly nutrition and positive outdoor activities.
- 3.17 The geographical profile of awards made last year across the districts is as follows:

Area	Value of Grant Awards £
Ashfield	78,252.41 [9.1%]
Bassetlaw	70,237.54 [8.1%]
Nottingham City	379,541.18 [44.1%]
Mansfield	81,010.15 [9.4%]
Newark and Sherwood	103,423.69 [12.0%]
Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe	140,059.69 [16.3%]

National Evaluation

- 3.18 The LNF was evaluated at the national level in 2005⁵; this identified the following key findings:
- Although resources are clearly beginning to reach the target groups as a whole, there remain some groups, such as BME groups, those with special needs and those in rural areas, who have yet to benefit as much as they might do. Better and more creative targeting of these groups through more effective outreach arrangements is required.⁶
 - Whilst the grants awarded address all of the main themes of the LNF, the themes of 'children's voice' and 'economic disadvantage' remain under-represented in the grant applications⁷.
 - It is clear that many children and young people have become empowered and engaged through the LNF and that the capacity of some groups to address local problems has increased.
 - Raising awareness of child protection within local groups has been an unequivocal success of the LNF and this is one of the very strong gains it can carry into Children's Trusts.

⁵ National Evaluation of the Local Network Fund: Was the money well used? DfES. Research Report 685.

⁶ As noted in section 5, Nottinghamshire LNF has been relatively successful in targeting grant awards towards BME and disability projects/groups and to groups based in rural areas.

⁷ These are 2 of the original 4 LNF outcome themes ie pre-ECM

- In terms of organisational structure, the local administrators, grant panels, outreach and support providers and LNF Call Centre have been successful services for the LNF and are seen as flexible and responsive to local needs.

Beyond March 2008

- 3.19 It is important to note that funding for both the LNF and Children's Fund ceases in March 2008. It is Government policy to route future funding for CYP services through local authorities and Children's Trusts to ensure that funds are directed to meet local needs and priorities in a coordinated fashion.

4. SURVEY FINDINGS

Introduction

- 4.1 This section of the report summarises the findings to emerge from the postal survey of 379 Nottinghamshire-based groups who received LNF grants between April 2001 and December 2006.
- 4.2 The data presented are percentages of the total sample. The survey findings are presented below under the following sub-headings:
- Benefits to children and young people.
 - Benefits for families and local communities.
 - Groups experience of LNF.
 - Engagement of children and young people.
 - Additionality.
 - Looking ahead.
- 4.3 Please note: with the sole exception of Table 11, all the percentages shown are row percentages which explains why the column totals do not equal 100%. Before each table we stipulate the number of respondents that answered a particular question, the percentages shown in the boxes relate to the number of respondents 'ticking' that response over that total. In the case of Table 1 for example, 379 groups responded to this question of which 159 'ticked' the second response 'Staying Safe', which equates to 42% [$159/379 \times 100$].

Benefits to Children and Young People

Table 1 : Which of the Every Child Matters Themes did your activities address?

- 4.4 Those surveyed were first asked which theme of the ECM agenda their project/ activity addressed. All 379 respondents answered this question.

Table 1	Number	%
Being Healthy	232	61
Staying Safe	159	42
Enjoying and Achieving	316	83
Making a Positive Contribution	240	63
Achieving Economic Well-being	77	20

- 4.5 This question was a multiple choice question as many projects addressed more than one ECM theme.
- 4.6 Amongst the sample of projects surveyed, The Enjoy and Achieve theme clearly comes out on top with 83% of the activities funded addressing these types of outcomes. Be Healthy and Make a Positive Contribution have also been addressed by over 60% of respondents.

4.7 By comparison, relatively few projects [20%] addressed the Achieving Economic Well-being theme and less than half the Staying Safe theme.

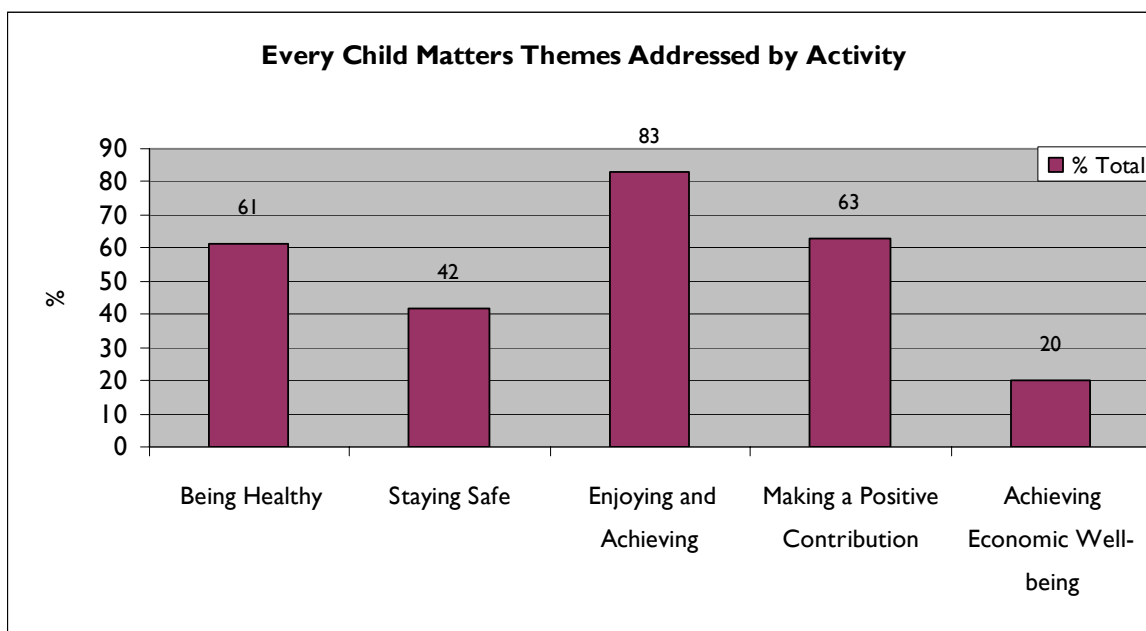


Table 2 : If your activities addressed the Being Healthy Theme, have they achieve any of the following outcomes..?

4.8 The 232 respondents who identified their activity as addressing the Being Healthy theme were asked what outcomes their activity had achieved.

Table 2 - Outcomes	%
Improved teenage sexual health	6
Promoted improved emotional well-being	60
Promoted healthy eating and physical activity	88
Reduced the take-up/ impact of drugs, alcohol and smoking on CYP	16
Not sure/ don't know	2

4.9 Over half of these projects achieved outcomes in relation to:

- Promoting healthy eating and physical activity.
- Improvements in the emotional well-being of CYP.

4.10 Reducing the take-up/ impact of drugs, alcohol and smoking and improving teenage sexual health were outcomes achieved by a relatively small number projects under this theme.

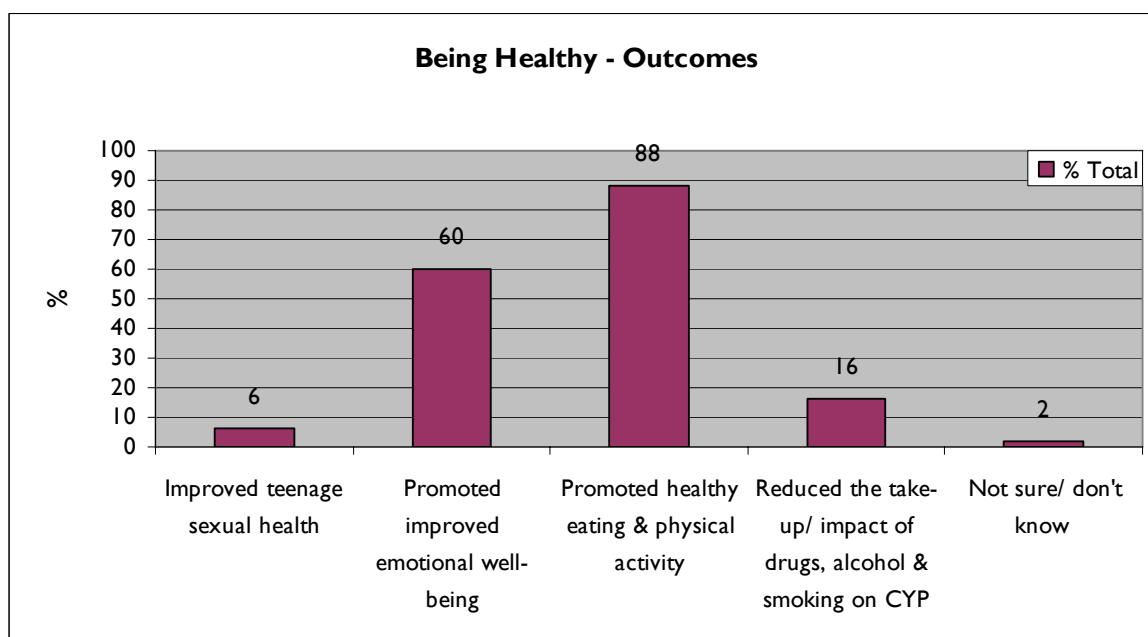


Table 3 : If your activities addressed the Staying Safe Theme, have they achieved any of the following outcomes..?

4.11 159 respondents felt that their activity addressed the Staying Safe Theme of Every Child Matters. They were asked to identify priority outcomes of their activity in relation to this Theme.

Table 3	%
Reduced incidents of bullying and victimisation	50
Reduced CYP who are victims of crime	19
Reduced CYP involved in criminal/ anti-social activities	49
Reduced the fear of crime amongst CYP	16
Reduced avoidable injuries incurred by CYP	35
Not sure/ don't know	20

4.12 There was quite a balanced spread of outcomes achieved amongst projects addressing this theme, but two stand out:

- Reducing incidents of bullying and victimization.
- Reducing involvement in criminal and anti-social activities.

4.13 Interestingly, one-fifth of respondents were not sure or didn't know any positive outcomes from their activity addressing the Staying Safe Theme; this is relatively high but we cannot be sure of the reason for this.

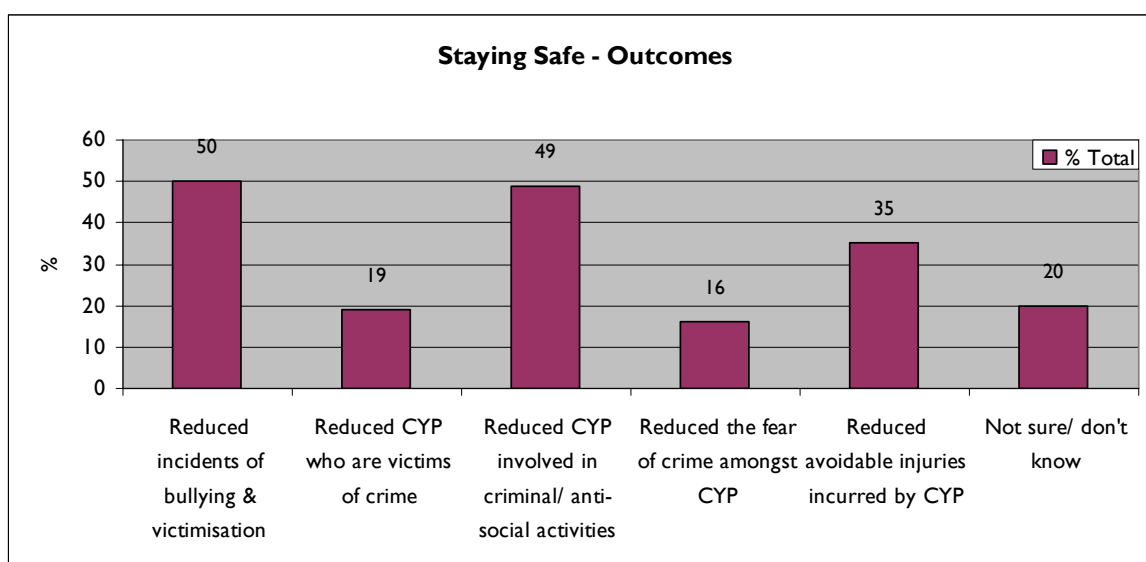


Table 4 : If your activities addressed the Enjoying and Achieving Theme, have they had any of the following outcomes...?

4.14 The Enjoying and Achieving Theme was the most common Every Child Matters Theme addressed by respondents to the survey. The 316 respondents were asked which priority positive outcomes were achieved by their activity.

Table 4	%
Increased the educational achievement of pupils aged 11 to 16 years	33
Increased access to a range of educational activities	59
Increased the range of curriculum opportunities available to CYP	34
Improved children's readiness to access the foundation stage at age 3	19
Improve children's readiness for school at age 5	23
Not sure/ don't know	14

4.15 There is a reasonable spread of outcomes achieved by projects focusing on the popular Enjoying and Achieving theme. But by a substantial margin, the majority of activities and outcomes achieved were in terms of increasing access to a range of educational and learning activities.

4.16 Around one-third of the projects which came within this theme each achieved outcomes in relation to two other priority areas: increasing the range of curriculum opportunities and increasing the educational achievement of pupils aged 11 to 16 years.

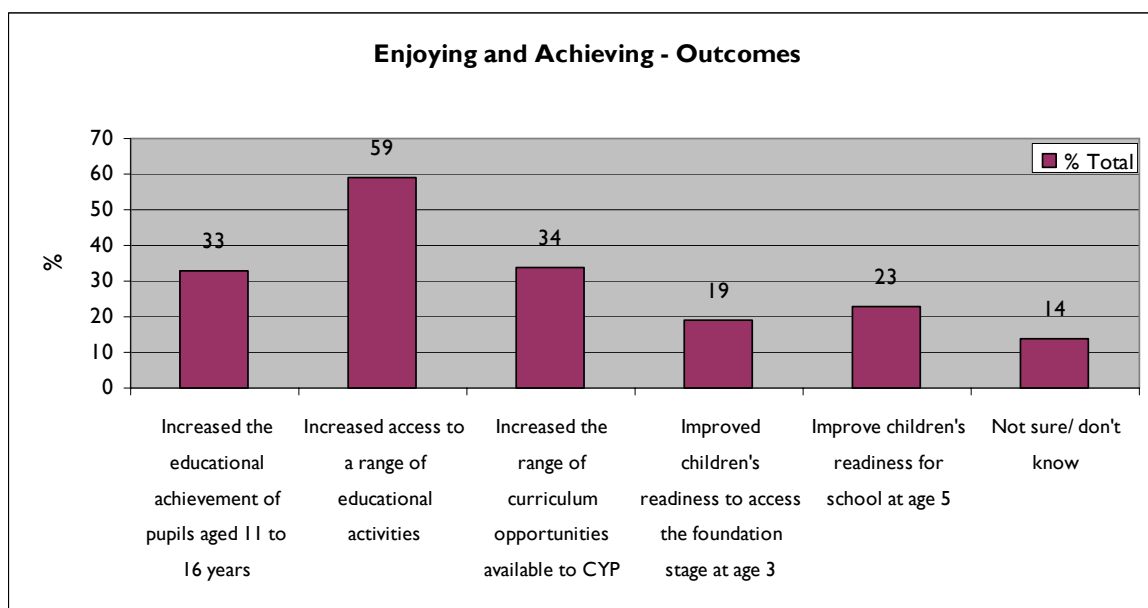


Table 5 : If your activities addressed the Making a Positive Contribution Theme, have they had any of the following outcomes..?

4.17 The 240 respondents who identified their activity addressing the Making a Positive Contribution Theme were asked to highlight positive outcomes of the activity.

Table 5	%
Promoted and increased levels of socially acceptable behaviour by CYP	80
Increased participation of CYP in out of school learning and community-based activities	73
Improved transitions for CYP with additional needs to adulthood	31
Increased the take-up of opportunities from Children's Centres	12
Not sure/ don't know	3

4.18 Over 70% of the projects which addressed this theme achieved outcomes in regard to:

- Promoting increased levels of socially acceptable behaviour by CYP.
- Increasing participation in out-of-school learning and community based activities.

4.19 One-third of respondents felt that their activity had improved the transitions for CYP with additional needs to adulthood.

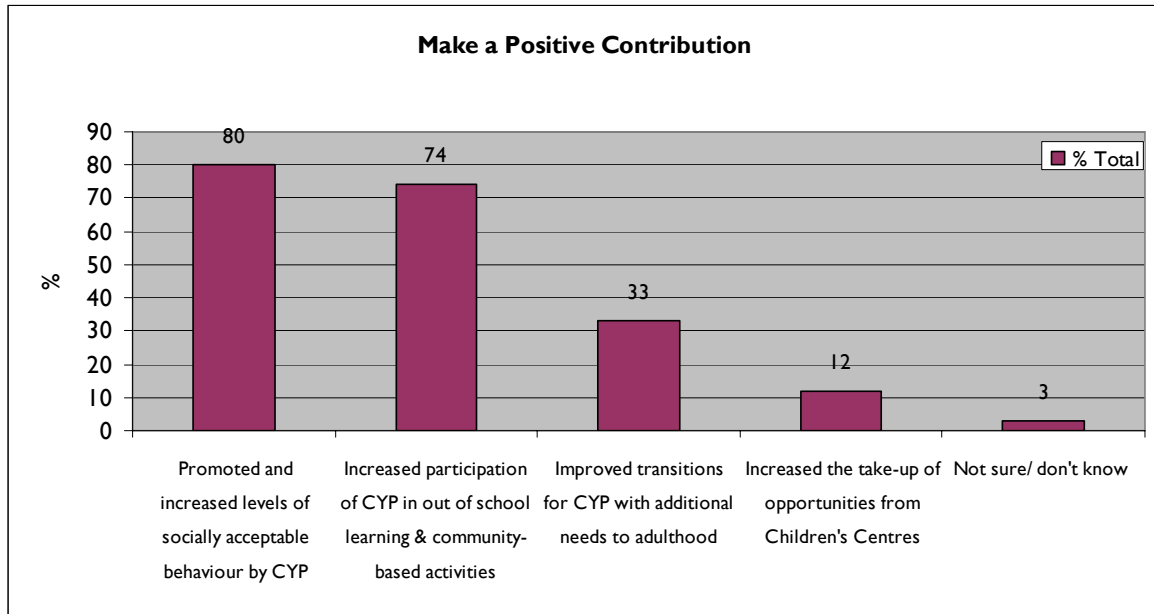


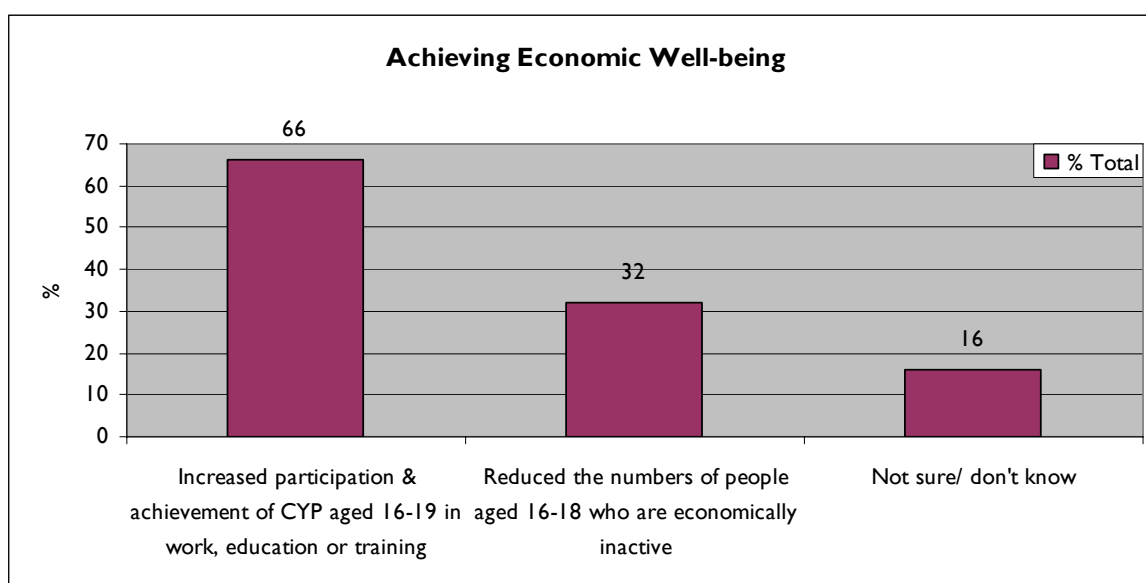
Table 6 : If your activities addressed the Achieving Economic Well-being, have they had any of the following outcomes..?

4.20 The 77 respondents who indicated that their activity addressed the Achieving Economic Well-being theme of Every Child Matters were asked of any positives outcomes.

Table 6	%
Increased participation and achievement of CYP aged 16-19 in work, education or training	66
Reduced the numbers of people aged 16-18 who are economically inactive	32
Not sure/ don't know	16

4.21 Two-thirds of the respondents who addressed priorities under this theme felt that their activities had increased the participation and achievement of CYP aged 16-19 in work, education or training.

4.22 The remaining third suggested that their projects had reduced the number of people aged 16-18 who are economically inactive.



Benefits for Families and Local Communities

Table 7 : From the experience of families and the local community, have the LNF-funded activities achieved any of the following outcomes...?

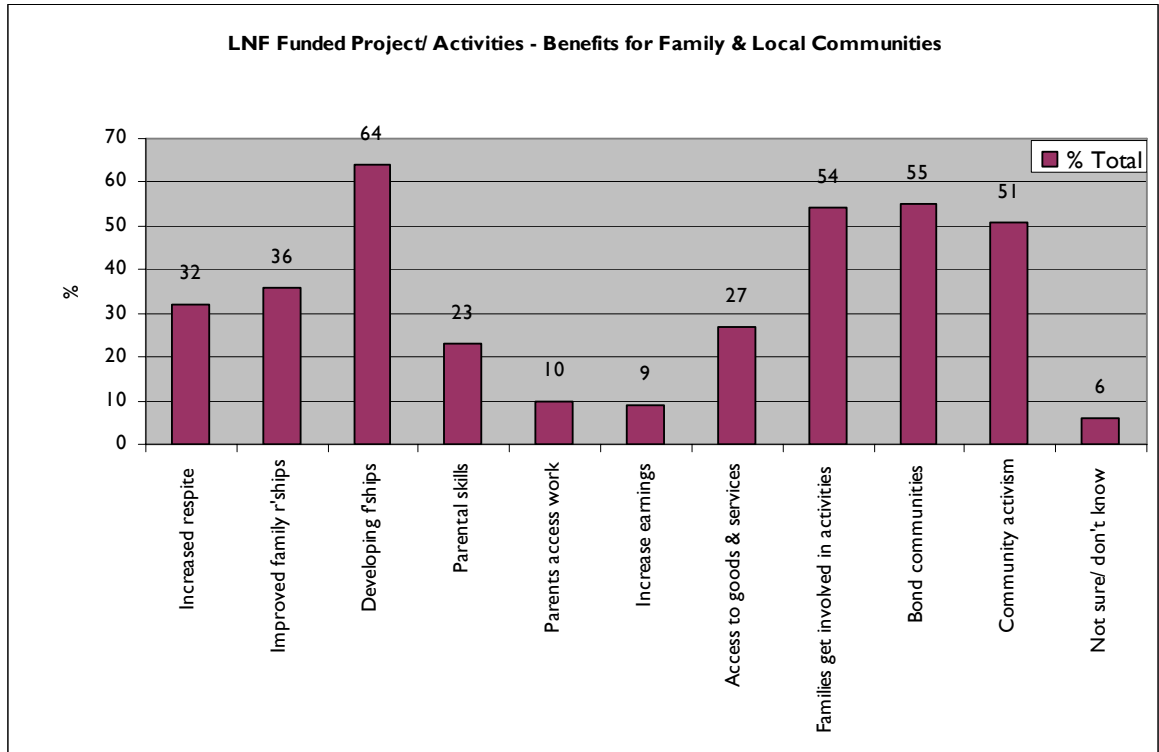
4.23 All survey respondents were asked about in any positive outcomes accrued from the LNF funded activities from the experience of families and the local community.

Table 7	%
Increased respite for parents/ guardian	32
Improved family relationships	36
Developing friendships and strengthening support networks	64
Developing parental skills and confidence	23
Helping jobless parents access work	10
Helping working parents increase their earnings [eg by increased hours or changing to better paid jobs]	9
Helping families get access to goods and services they could otherwise not afford	27
Helping families get involved in activities [eg sports, cultural, outings] they could otherwise not afford	54
Helping to bond communities - promoting community cohesion/ engagement/ belonging	55
Stimulating community activism/ volunteering	51
Not sure/ don't know	6

4.24 Nearly two-thirds of the groups felt that LNF funded activities had led to the developing of friendships and strengthening support networks in local communities.

4.25 The three other outcomes of key significance to families and local communities were:

- Helping to bond communities by promoting community cohesion/ engagement/ belonging [55%].
- Helping families get involved in activities they could otherwise not afford [54%].
- Stimulating community activism and volunteering [51%].



Groups Experience of LNF

Table 8 : From your point of view, did the LNF-funded activities/ project achieve any of the following outcomes...?

4.26 All respondents were asked about the impact of the LNF on their group itself.

4.27 The findings demonstrate that most groups felt they benefited in a variety of ways from their engagement in the LNF programme.

4.28 The three positive outcomes identified by the majority of respondents were:

- Improving the quality and accessibility of existing services [56%].
- Extending and expanding existing activities to a larger client group [55%].
- Developing and providing completely new activities for CYP [49%].

Table 8	%
Improving the quality and accessibility of existing services	56
Extending & expanding existing activities to a larger client group – increasing take-up	55
Better targeting of services on the hardest to help & most disadvantaged communities	35
Developing and providing completely new activities for CYP	49
Developing a completely new project and a range of activities within it	38
Helping your group continue on a more sustainable basis	61
Not sure/ don't know	3

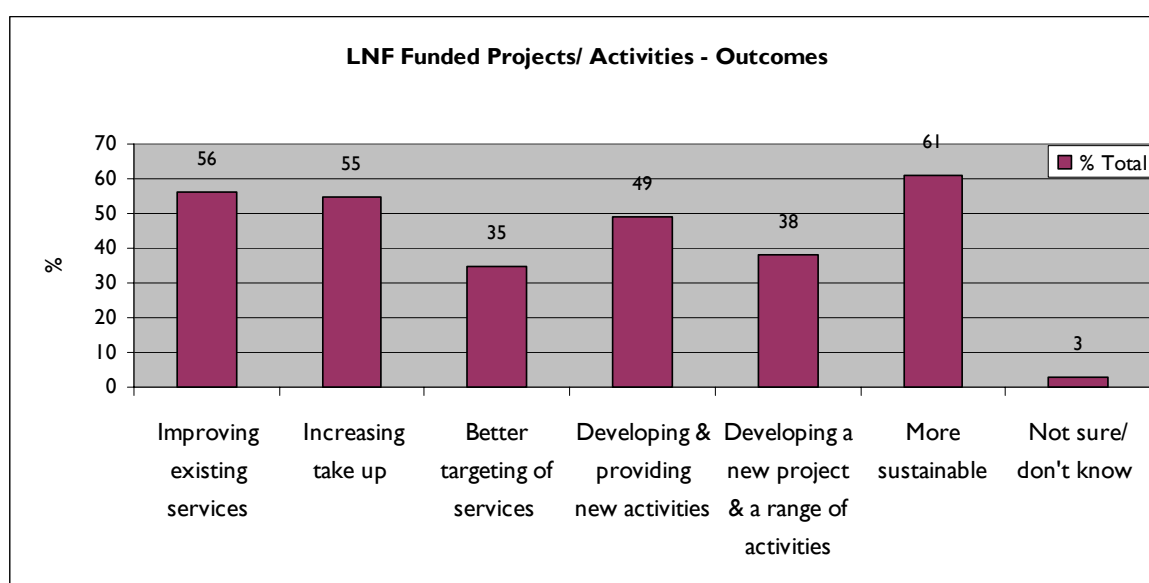
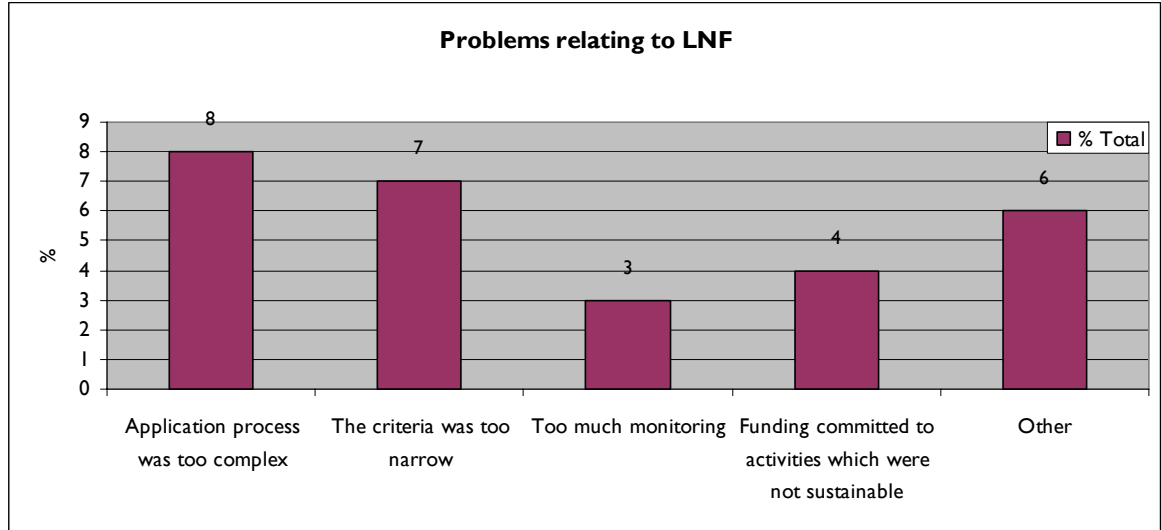


Table 9 : Were there any problems stemming from your group’s involvement in the LNF programme..?

4.29 Respondents were asked if they had encountered any problems which had arisen through their group’s involvement in the LNF.

Table 9	%
The application process was too complex	8
The criteria were too narrow	7
Too much monitoring	3
Funding committed to activities which were not sustainable	4
Other	6

4.30 Although some grant recipients may be reluctant to identify problems, encouragingly the vast majority did not identify any difficulties at all. 8% of the total number of respondents felt that the application process was too complex whilst 7% suggested that the criteria for receiving an LNF grant was too narrow. Interestingly, both these issues were identified by a relatively high proportion of respondents who put forward suggestions about how the fund could be improved [see below].



Engagement of Children and Young People

Table 10 : In what ways did your activities/ project empower CYP..?

4.31 Respondents were asked to consider their engagement of CYP through LNF-funded activities and the benefits arising from this.

Table 10	%
Developing the idea/ proposal with you	37
Consulting other CYP about the idea/ proposal	21
Helping construct/ develop the LNF application	9
Representation on a LNF Grants Panel	1
Organising and running the activities/ project	36
Taking part and delivering activities which had been LNF funded	49
Being involved in the monitoring/ feedback process about how well the project was working	45
Not sure/ don't know	18

4.32 Taking part and delivering activities which had been LNF-funded was alluded to by 49% of respondents. 45% of those surveyed felt that CYP were engaged by being involved in the monitoring/ feedback process about how well the project was working.

4.33 Other significant ways of engaging CYP include:

- CYP developing the idea/ proposal with you [37%].
- CYP helping with the organisation and running the activity/ project [36%].
- Consulting other CYP about the idea/ proposal [21%].

4.34 One-fifth [18%] of respondents said they were not sure in what ways CYP were engaged through LNF funded activities.

Additionality

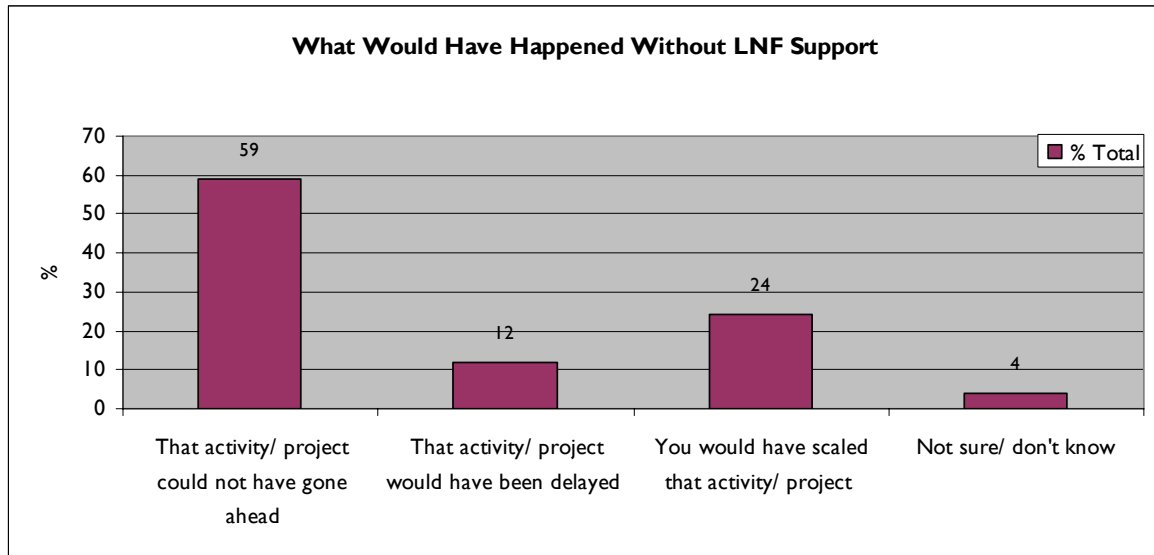
Table II : What would probably have happened if the LNF had not existed..?

4.35 All respondents were asked what would have happened if the LNF had not existed to their activity/ project for CYP. Respondents were asked to identify only one of the options in their response to this question, hence the % column total is 100%.

Table II	%
That activity/ project could not have gone ahead	59
That activity/ project would have been delayed	12
You would have scaled that activity/ project down	24
Not sure/ don't know	5
Total [column]	100

4.36 The majority [59%] of respondents felt that their project could not have gone ahead without LNF grant support. Just under a quarter of the respondents felt that their project would have had to have been scaled down to have gone ahead and 12% said that it would have been delayed.

4.37 Taken together these findings suggest that 'deadweight' or non-additionality in relation to the LNF in Nottinghamshire was relatively low.



Looking Ahead

4.38 The questionnaire ended with two open questions about the future; having analysed the responses using a coding framework we present the findings in the tables below.

Table 12 : In its current form, how can the LNF be improved..?

4.39 In total, 134 groups responded to the question; of these 21% express a view that no improvements could be made to the LNF programme at all, as typified by these comments:

“I think the application and monitoring processes are the most user-friendly I have ever encountered”

“We don’t think that much improvement is necessary because it appears to work really well”

“NCF have been very professional and helpful, I can’t see how they can improve”

“I think LNF is a super fund, few improvements could be made”

4.40 Just over 100 respondents did make suggestions as to how the LNF might be improved; those most frequently alluded to are as follows.

4.41 The suggestions for improvement fell into three main categories as set out in the table below, but the majority of responses concerned grant eligibility and the application and monitoring process.

I. Eligibility for LNF Support

Broaden the scope/criteria of the fund and increase the flexibility as to how it can be used eg young adults; include buildings/ refurbishment costs; multi-purpose/thematic projects; additional target groups. Groups should be given more opportunities to apply for more than one grant.

Better access to repeat/recurring funding for existing groups and projects that are demonstrably making a difference – ie support what works already and help roll it out. Recurrent monies would help continuity and development. Fund ongoing projects to help roll them out across a wider area or move into another phase.

Too much emphasis is given to delivering something 'new' each time.

Extend the period over which awards can be made to 3-5 years in some instances. More sustainable medium term funding rather than one or two years. The scale of activities supported is too small in some cases and more time is needed to develop and embed activities.

Increase the upper threshold/ceiling of grant awards.

II. Application, Appraisal and Monitoring Process

A simpler and shorter application form, clearer questions. Make it easier to complete. Forms are too long and time-consuming. Groups do not always have detailed information to hand. Make it less complicated and easier to understand. Easier paperwork and less jargon.

Clearer guidelines and guidance about making an application and the funding criteria. Ensure form and notes contain all requirements without additional answers. More funding guidance open days and case studies.

Better communication about the progress/position of an application – 'where things are at'. Quicker and clearer about notification of success and offer. Quicker turnaround and payment of awards. Ensure all NCF staff give consistent/accurate information about process and timescales.

Reduce the time between application and decision eg hold more frequent grant panels to speed up the decision-making process. NCF should offer quicker feedback if there are problems with an application.

Facilitate networking between similar themes/projects and encourage the exchange of good practice and learning – clusters, networks – real and virtual. Make new groups more aware of successful projects and opportunities to share ideas and talk to previous applicants.

More follow-up monitoring visits and 'light touch' support. Visits are preferred to monitoring forms. More regular contact after awards are made and even after grant period if possible. Increase contact on a one to one basis.

III. Improving Awareness and Initial Engagement With Groups

Make more grassroots groups aware of the LNF. Improve the way information is filtered out to groups via outreach, word of mouth and promotion eg advertising, mailshots.

Include an online application and guidance option/ portal.

Adopt a more proactive commissioning approach – contact relevant groups regarding priorities and project ideas, facilitate joint projects.

All the different funding pots should be put under one "umbrella" fund; there are too many.

Be more specific about what other funding is available in addition to LNF.

LNF is a poor name – it says nothing about children, the word 'network' is odd and it doesn't mention Nottinghamshire.

4.42 There were also a smaller number of other responses which are set out below.

IV. Other Suggestions for Improvement

More focus on small clubs and groups to support sustainability. Maintain and sustain small groups in rural settings.

Fund activities in curriculum time when maximum numbers of children can be accessed - fund more activities during school hours – proven way to access some hard to reach groups.

Make it more accessible.

Assist groups to make better planning applications re buildings.

Making access to funding less complicated.

More focus on sport and health activities.

Funding should be more tailored to group needs.

The LNF is due to end in March 2008, what should happen after that..?

4.43 A total of 113 respondents answered the final question in the survey. There were broadly two sets of responses:

4.44 Firstly, those who would like to see the LNF continue beyond March 2008, either in its current form or with some minor modifications. The vast majority of respondents fall into this category. Typical responses were as follows:

“It should re-start as it is. The fund is invaluable”

“This is a HUGE shame! The LNF has supported many worthwhile projects – I do hope funding can be found to enable it to continue”

“It should not end, the fund should continue! It is an invaluable community asset”

4.45 Secondly, those who acknowledge that the fund will end in its current form and who therefore emphasise the need for alternative funding streams to be developed, or existing ones extended, which address the core aims of the LNF – small grants for grassroots community groups, flexibility and access to appropriate support. Responses included the following:

“Similar funding must be made available from other sources”

“Ideally we want to see the same or similar funding opportunities made available. The LNF has been essential to our club’s viability”

“If it cannot continue as before, then a revised fund doing similar things should be found”

5. KEY CONSULTATIONS

Introduction

5.1 This section summarises the key issues arising from our key consultations with the following people:

- Susan Brown and Lee Broughton – NCF
- Cathy White, Beth Harvey and Lucy Hutson – LNF Outreach Team
- Aneela Asim – Nottinghamshire Black Partnership
- Susan Tremlow, Sara Mayer and Aunjna Jani – Nottingham City Council
- Councillor Joyce Bosnjak and Peter Clarke – Nottinghamshire County Council
- Janet Lewis – Base 51
- Michael Newstead – Bassetlaw CVS
- Richard Lea – Broxtowe Borough Council
- Nigel Pimlott – Frontier Trust
- Caroline Bell – Self-Help Nottingham
- Carola Jones – Nottinghamshire RCC
- Pam Wisher – Gedling CVS
- Kath Farmer – Nottinghamshire County Council
- Kate Deane – New Deal for Communities
- Dean Titterton – Nottingham and Nottinghamshire YMCA
- Afzal Sadiq – Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Racial Equality Council
- Lisa Barker – Nottinghamshire Clubs for Young People
- Hilary Wells – Beeston Volunteer Centre

Issues and Observations

5.2 There is felt to be quite a close strategic fit between the outcomes and priorities of many of the projects which have been funded and CYPP/LAA priorities. It also has to be acknowledged that these strategic plans are a relatively recent innovation and, in practice, levels of awareness of such plans at grassroots levels are, and perhaps always will be, quite limited. There may also be scope to improve the relationship between different funds, such as the Children's Fund, BLF's Awards for All, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the LNF.

5.3 The fund exists against a background of more limited access to core funding amongst more established and larger voluntary and community organisations in Nottinghamshire and the region. There is also a growing, some might say unrealistic, expectation amongst local authorities that certain types of VCS activities [eg after school clubs, sports projects] should be self-financing.

- 5.4 There is a recognition of the need for short-term, 'seedcorn' funding of this kind for very small and more informal community groups, many of who have had little or no access to funding in the past. But this also means that the vast majority of activities are on a very small scale and relatively short term. It was pointed out that for many groups which have put forward applications, small grant awards are deemed to be 'manageable'; conversely, were larger awards of say £10,000 or more available this would not reflect the needs and capacities of many such groups. Some consultees felt that more two year funded projects could have been encouraged and supported however. Overall consultees believe the £250 - £7,000 banding is about right.
- 5.5 It was suggested that in some instances more emphasis could have been given to funding pilot projects via the LNF with a view to wider dissemination of lessons in a planned way eg in relation to specific priority groups or themes.
- 5.6 Given the very large numbers of community groups, clubs and other grassroots 'organisations' operating across the County, and the 'churn' as groups come and go, the task of ensuring that the LNF is widely known about and understood is a challenging one. Overall, it was felt that NCF had been quite successful in promoting the LNF via publicity and direct marketing activities but that there was scope for improvement, especially during the early stages. LNF is a national fund of course so there are limitations so there was no scope to change the branding of the programme although community foundations were given flexibility over marketing and promotional activities.
- 5.7 It was felt that appropriate steps had been taken, with some success, to ensure that priority were made aware of and supported in putting forward strong applications for LNF grants from priority groups such as BME groups [well in excess of half of City-based awards have been made to such groups] and to people with disabilities and groups operating in more remote rural areas across the County.
- 5.8 It is acknowledged that some groups do find the application processes onerous, especially the paperwork and there is scope for improvement; but there are four issues to consider:
- This largely applies to newly established and very small and informal groups, although of course these are the target audience for the fund.
 - The documentation is used on a national basis and cannot be altered at a local level.
 - Advice and guidance about the application process is freely available via the outreach team, NCF and other organisations such as CVSs and the Rural Community Council.
 - A side benefit of the LNF is that it helps develop capacity amongst smaller grassroots groups in applying for external funds and in managing those funds appropriately.
- 5.9 Outreach activities have largely been focused on the City of Nottingham, Ashfield and Mansfield due to limited resources and the need to focus on areas experiencing relatively high levels of multiple deprivation. Nevertheless, the spread of LNF applications received by the NCF has been fairly broad across the local authority districts in North Nottinghamshire in particular.

- 5.10 Outreach Workers have helped promote the fund and their support role via networking with CVSs and other voluntary sector agencies and attending funding fairs/surgeries. Last year NCF ran a course on how to apply for LNF funding but attendance was mixed which further underlines the need and overall preference amongst groups for one to one support delivered in situ. Outreach Workers frequently perform a capacity-building role by providing groups [usually volunteers] with information and advice about other sources of funding and how to make robust applications.
- 5.11 Generally, applications are regarded as being of a fairly high standard, especially since many of the groups have a limited track record of submitting applications of this kind. Longstanding Panel members believe the quality of applications has steadily improved over the years due to the support offered by NCF Grant Officers and Outreach Workers as well as CVSs and the RCC who now offer help with grant applications and funding advice to many smaller groups.
- 5.12 Where applications fall short, the LNF officers do a good job in helping groups reshape and enhance applications prior to resubmission. Panel members generally welcomed this constructive process of supporting reapplications and felt it lessened the risk of some below standard applications being 'waved through'. Some consultees felt that an electronic version of the LNF application form would enhance the visual quality and presentation of applications, at the present time the majority of applications are hand written.
- 5.13 The range of ideas coming forward for assessment and appraisal has been quite impressive overall with most aspects of the ECM framework being addressed, although activities designed to help CYP achieve economic well-being tend to have a lower profile. Some Panel members suggested there are sometimes patterns coming through such as when the Disability Act came into force there was an increase in applications relating to access to buildings and there have been times when a flow of applications have come in for replacing play equipment amongst out-of-school clubs and nurseries. There is a good range and breadth to the applications received both geographically and in terms of the types of communities and priority groups coming forward, especially BME groups.
- 5.14 All the Panel members we interviewed felt they had been well briefed by NCF and received clear and concise information their roles and responsibilities and the conduct of Panel meetings. Some had also been able to draw on the experience of colleagues who were still, or had been, Grant Panel members. Panel members valued the induction into the LNF they had received and found it very helpful to meet the NCF Grant Officers; an opportunity to also meet Outreach Workers would have been welcomed and some Panel members would like to have had a better understanding of their role.
- 5.15 Panel members generally feel well informed about forthcoming LNF applications and are provided with sufficient information prior to meetings. Most are very satisfied with the summaries produced by NCF as well as the more detailed information pertaining to applications they are invited to take a close interest in due to their experience and expertise. Documentation is almost always received in plenty of time but some Panel members did underline that it can be difficult for them to read and assimilate all the information prior to a meeting due to other responsibilities and priorities.

- 5.16 Panel meetings are generally regarded as being well organised and productive and well chaired. They are usually of about the right duration but this depends largely on the number of applications coming forward for consideration. The frequency of the meetings is felt to be appropriate and the fact that the venues change is seen as a positive factor. Panel members are confident that all is fair and 'above board' with regard to declarations of interest and objectivity in appraising applications and that NCF are rigorous in ensuring this is always the case.
- 5.17 While the composition of Panels is felt to be good overall, it was suggested that there could be more younger people involved, especially those who have partaken in other LNF-funded projects. This is reflected in the survey findings set out in Table 10 of section 4 above – only 1% of the project's surveyed had engaged CYP through involvement in Grant Panels. However, LNF applications pertaining to inner Nottingham [particularly Area 4] are now assessed by a Young Person's Panel which was developed in cooperation with the Partnership Council; this Panel meets on a monthly basis and has equal status to the NCF Grants Panel. Panel members pointed out that their involvement in the overall process had helped to increase their awareness and understanding of the community sector within the City and rural areas and to get a better appreciation of its strengths and potential in addressing the needs of CYP, families and the communities in which they live. Monitoring information about projects previously supported would be welcome but it is appreciated that this would involve considerable administrative time and there may not be an opportunity to discuss such information at Panel meetings anyway.
- 5.18 NCF are widely regarded as being professional, fair and efficient in the way they have managed and administered the LNF. Grant recipients and Panel members alike indicated that NCF staff and management are responsive and helpful and offer practical advice and feedback which they find valuable. Grant Officers possess a broad knowledge of other funding streams and support services which groups may benefit from but not be aware of.
- 5.19 NCF have administered the LNF programme efficiently as might be expected since they have substantial experience and expertise to draw upon. They are regarded not just as a competent and impartial fund administrator but also as a proactive partner in the development of services for CYP. Monitoring procedures have been followed in accordance with contract requirements. While the proportion of End of Grant Claim forms completed and returned is understood to be quite high [and this process is ongoing] there have been times when a back-log has developed in terms of inputting information onto the national LNF database; this partly reflects pressures on staff time but limited access to performance reports based on data which is submitted is also a factor – these are both issues which are known to affect virtually all LNF delivery agents.
- 5.20 Raising awareness of child protection within local groups has been an unequivocal success of the LNF at a national level and this has also been the case in Nottinghamshire. NCF have offered monthly training courses in child protection training delivered by Family Care. In 2006-07, 11 sessions took place involving 226 individuals within 120 groups.
- 5.21 All the consultees we spoke to are very keen to see the LNF [or something similar] continue beyond March 2008 but modifications should be made which reflect lessons learnt and the changing policy and strategic context. Commissioning also lies at the heart of the future operation of local authority children's services via Children's Trusts and increasing weight being given to early intervention and preventative activities by local authorities in particular. Should the LNF or similar small grants programme continue, it will need to consider how the activities it supports would form part of such a strategic approach.

6. KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATION

Introduction

6.1 This final section of the report draws out our main conclusions and recommendations.

Key Messages

6.2 The five strategic outcomes of the ECM strategy⁸, together with other priorities, should be addressed at a local level through the delivery and monitoring of Children and Young People Plan's and the CYP Block of Local Area Agreement's. The LNF was launched prior to these strategic developments but has been successfully adapted to respond to them.

6.3 Between 2001 – 2007 the LNF in Nottinghamshire has invested £5.8m in 1,096 grassroots community groups, representing an average grant award of £5,300.

6.4 A diverse range of projects, schemes and groups has been funded which have contributed to ECM outcomes and the strategic priorities identified in the City and County Children and Young People's Plans and Local Area Agreements.

6.5 Many CYP have benefited from the activities supported, particularly in relation to the following priority areas:

- Be Healthy:
 - ▶ Promoted healthy eating and physical activity.
 - ▶ Improved emotional well-being.
- Stay Safe:
 - ▶ Reduced incidents of bullying and victimisation.
 - ▶ Reduced involvement in criminal and anti-social activities.
- Enjoy and Achieve:
 - ▶ Increased access to a range of educational activities.
 - ▶ Increased the range of curriculum opportunities available to CYP.
 - ▶ Increased the educational achievement of pupils aged 11 to 16 years.
- Make a Positive Contribution:
 - ▶ Promoted and increased levels of socially acceptable behaviour.
 - ▶ Increased participation in out-of-school learning and community-based activities.
- Achieve Economic Well-Being:
 - ▶ Increased participation and achievement of CYP in work, education or training.

⁸ ECM outcomes: Be Healthy; Stay Safe; Enjoy and Achieve; Make a Positive Contribution; and Achieve Economic Well-Being.

- 6.6 CYP have also benefited directly from their own engagement in LNF-funded projects, especially in terms of developing ideas, delivering and taking part in activities and assessing their value to themselves, other CYP and to families. Their involvement in and influence on the grant assessment process has been more limited however; earlier this year a Young People's Panel operating in Nottingham began to assess LNF applications on an equal footing with the NCF Panel but this development, though welcome, is rather belated.
- 6.7 LNF funding and associated support has made a positive contribution to many small voluntary, community and self-help groups on four fronts:
- Activities have been extended to enable them to be accessed by more CYP, especially those in priority groups. The quality of services have also been enhanced.
 - The sustainability of many groups has been enhanced, at least in the short term, and the confidence and skills of volunteers and CYP involved in the projects has increased.
 - In some instances groups have been able to 'lever in' additional income [eg other grants or sponsorship] from other sources or, more usually, goodwill and volunteer help from within local communities.
 - The fund has helped raise awareness of child protection issues amongst local groups – a safeguarding/ child protection policy is needed as a condition of funding in all cases with support available to produce or update a policy where required, including training courses organized by NCF.
- 6.8 Outreach work and NCF networks have enabled funds to be targeted at priority groups, such as those representing BME communities and disabled people, as well as groups operating in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in remote rural areas and the inner city. This has been a challenging task addressed over a number of years and although there has been success it is acknowledged that even greater VCS 'market penetration' could have been achieved with more resources and greater local influence over promotional activities and branding.
- 6.9 Nottinghamshire NCF have proved to be an exemplary delivery agent for the LNF: local, knowledgeable, independent and reliable. They are widely regarded as being a 'safe pair of hands' in managing the fund, efficient administrators and accountable to their key stakeholders. The monitoring of activities has been good, although there have been times when back-logs have developed in terms of inputting information from End of Grant forms on the national LNF database. NCF's added value has gone beyond fund administration to embrace elements of group capacity and confidence building with Outreach Workers also playing a valuable role in this regard.
- 6.10 The NCF Grant Panel process has worked well and ensured that decision-making is always open and 'above board' and seen to be so. It has also provided an opportunity for local people and CYP experts to contribute to the process and, in turn, benefit from it through networking and awareness-raising. The experience and skills of Panel members has been a key factor in enabling the fund to be responsive to local needs and priorities. Panel members have been properly informed of their duties and responsibilities, the criteria associated with LNF and other grant schemes and documentation relating to applications. Some Panel members would welcome the opportunity to meet LNF Outreach Workers and discuss their work and receive more feedback about the progress of projects.

- 6.11 LNF Nottinghamshire has demonstrated how relatively small amounts of grant can go a long way and make a big difference to small, embryonic and highly localised groups. Most of this additional activity could not have been achieved without LNF funding or if it had it may have been delayed and/or scaled down.
- 6.12 Although few groups experienced significant difficulties with the LNF grant application and monitoring process – simplifying paperwork, producing more succinct guidance and more accessible information about the status of grant applications were identified as areas for improvement. Similarly, although the fund is widely acknowledged to be quite inclusive, many groups would like to go further by, for example, broadening or relaxing criteria particularly in relation to items and activities which LNF will/not fund.
- 6.13 It seems reasonable to conclude therefore that although the LNF funding model has been remarkably accessible and responsive to the community sector and has operated with minimal bureaucracy, a locally managed and delivered fund would allow for greater flexibility and improved targeting.
- 6.14 The LNF has been very positively received and applied by many groups supporting CYP across the City and County and its demise will be a huge loss to the sector at a time when the Children's Fund is also coming to an end and other sources of small scale grant funding are becoming increasingly scarce. The LNF has filled a funding gap in provision which may rapidly reappear beyond March 2008 when both it and the Children's Fund come to an end.
- 6.15 Decisions regarding the future allocation of funding to support CYP, and the role of the VCS in such arrangements and activities, lie with the emerging Children's Trusts and the two strategic partnerships which are bringing them into being – Nottingham Strategic Partnership for Children, Young people and Families [SPCYPF] and Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership [CYPSP].

Recommendation

- 6.16 The LNF has demonstrated the need for, and value of, supporting frontline community groups who make an important contribution to the social economy and NCF have been an independent and highly effective fund manager.
- 6.17 As the development of Children's Trusts gathers momentum funders must acknowledge that a discrete grant-making mechanism along the lines of LNF can complement and enhance the commissioning-based approach. Moreover, a locally managed fund would offer considerable scope for improving upon the successful LNF through increased flexibility, discretion and targeting at the grassroots level.
- 6.18 We therefore recommend that the two strategic partnerships for CYP give consideration to the development of a new CYP small grants programme for Nottinghamshire to become operational in April 2008 when the LNF and Children's Fund expire. A successor fund might broaden its scope to embrace the target groups of both these funds [ie all CYP from birth to 19] and/or make modifications to promotional or outreach activities, targeting, the size of awards and documentation. These and other issues require consultation and consideration amongst key stakeholders leading to the development of a fund specification for more formal consideration by both partnerships early in the new year.

Appendix A : Nottingham LAA 2006 – 2009

Outcomes to be Delivered : Children and Young People

1. Sure Start and Children's Centres to ensure a firm foundation in the Early Years for all young children and their families.
2. Be Healthy - Improved health of young people.
3. Be healthy - Reduce the rate of infant mortality
4. Be Safe - Reduced Numbers of children and young people suffering repeat episodes of harm.
5. Enjoy and Achieve - Raise educational attainment, particularly for under-achieving groups.
6. To ensure that children and young people are more fully engaged in education and learning.
7. Economic Wellbeing - Reduce numbers of young people NEET, particularly in priority groups.
8. Provide and improve universal and targeted support for parents and carers and encourage parents to take a more active role in their children's education.

Appendix B : Nottinghamshire LAA 2006 - 2009 Agreed Outcomes and Priorities : Children and Young People

LAA Priority 1: Every Child Matters Outcome: Being Healthy

Improve the health of children and young people

Improve teenage sexual health leading to reduced teenage conceptions

Promote improved emotional well-being

Promote healthy eating and physical activity

Reduce the negative impact of drug, alcohol and smoking on children and young people

LAA Priority 2: Every Child Matters Outcome: Staying Safe

Increase the safety of children and young people and reduce anti social behaviour

Reduce incidents of bullying and children and young people's fear of bullying and reduce incidents of victimisation because of race, gender, sexual orientation or religion

Reduce the numbers of children and young people who are victims of crime

Reduce youth crime and children and young people's fear of crime

Reduce avoidable injuries incurred by children and young people

LAA Priority 3: Every Child Matters Outcome: Enjoying and Achieving

Improve the attainment of children and young people and contribute to enjoyment

Increase the educational achievement of pupils aged 11 to 16 years

Increase access to a range of recreational activities

Increase the range of curriculum opportunities and activities offered to young people in and beyond school

Improve children's readiness to access the foundation stage at age 3.

Improve children's readiness for school at age 5

LAA Priority 4: Every Child Matters Outcome: Making a Positive Contribution

Raise aspirations and improve children and young people's attitude to learning and engagement

Promote socially acceptable behaviour by young people

Increase participation of children and young people in out of school learning, community engagement and citizenship activities

Improve transitions for young people with additional needs to adulthood

Increase participation of parents in Children's Centres

LAA Priority 5: Every Child Matters Outcome: Achieving Economic Well-being

Increase the participation of young people in employment, education and training post 16

Increase the participation and achievement of young people aged 16-19 [focusing on those in low performing communities and vulnerable groups]

Reduce the number of young people aged 16 to 18 who are not economically active.