



Network News

Merseyside
Expanding Horizons

February 2005

EXPANDING HORIZONS - SOCIAL CAPITAL GRANTS

We are inviting community groups and voluntary organisations working with excluded groups to apply for funding (between £500 - £5,000) to support innovative / capacity building activities which will help the organisation to 'grow'.

Social Capital funding will support the development and growth of individual small voluntary and community organisations and groups. It will also help organisations develop a good track record and eventually apply for other funding in their own right. It is primarily, but not exclusively, concerned with providing support for new and emerging organisations. Existing organisations are also encouraged to apply for support for new / innovative activities.

You must be a group or organisation working within Merseyside with a constitution and membership. Organisations must not have previously received ESF funding, Expanding Horizons Social Capital Grant, or substantial financial support from other sources for the project.

This initiative is part-funded by the European Social Fund and Single Regeneration Budget.

For further information and an application pack please contact Lisa Baxter at Expanding Horizons, telephone 0151 330 0552 or email lisabaxter@expandinghorizons.co.uk.

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Staff Bulletin

The Committee and staff of MEH would like to welcome Jenny Cross to the Merseyside Social Inclusion Observatory (MSIO) team. Jenny is the new Community Research and Information Officer for MSIO and will be mainly based at the MEH office working along side Claire Stevens, MSIO's Community Engagement Co-ordinator. Jenny has worked as Information Co-ordinator for Sure Start Parr in St Helens and at St Helens Chamber of Commerce. We wish her all the best in her new role.

Please note their new telephone numbers are as follows:

To contact Jenny Cross at the MEH office telephone 0151 330 2025

To contact Claire Stevens at the MEH office telephone 0151 330 0551

Contact Us:

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The National Action Plans on Social Inclusion - Working Together to Develop Better Policies to Combat Poverty and Exclusion.

By Katherine Duffy

Katherine Duffy is Director of Work-Based Learning for the De Montfort University's Business School. Her research interests are in social and labour policy. Her current research interest is in European governance in the social sphere, with particular reference to the National Action Plans for Social Inclusion (NAPs). She has undertaken consultancy for Oxfam UK concerning NGO strategy on the NAPs.

For many years Katherine was active in social initiatives in her local community. Since 2001, Katherine has been a member of the Europe-wide European Anti-Poverty Network's Social Inclusion Review Group and from 2002 a member of its Social Inclusion Steering Group. At national level, Katherine is currently a member of the England Committee of the UK Anti-Poverty Network and Chair of the UK Social Policy Task Force (SPTF), a grouping of anti-poverty networks and organizations following up on the UK National Action Plan on Social Inclusion.

Here she talks about The National Plan (NAP) on Social Inclusion, its aims, objectives and processes and the role of the Social Policy Task Force (SPTF).

The National Action Plans - Aims & Objectives

Since 2001, every EU government has had to prepare a National Plan focusing on a common set of Objectives that governments have signed up to at a summit meeting in Lisbon. These Objectives are:

1. To facilitate participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services.
2. To prevent the risks of exclusion.
3. To help the most vulnerable.
4. To mobilise all relevant bodies.

Also, governments have agreed a common set of Indicators to measure how well each government has done in achieving the anti-poverty targets it has set. The aim of the Plan process is that by 2010, European Union member states will have made a 'decisive impact on poverty', by learning from each other and because they have the drive behind them created by the Plans.

The Plan Process

The Plans provide a way for governments to share experience of what works and develop new ways of combating poverty. The European Commission prepares a Joint Report that reviews the Plans and comments on how well (or not) governments are doing at meeting their targets and fulfilling the common Objectives.

So far, there have been two rounds of Plans and the next set will be submitted in 2006. The process has changed a bit - it's been 'streamlined' so that the Commission will put in a single report to the 2006 Spring Council covering several areas so that Ministers of the member governments can consider social policy at the same time as the economic policy.

What did the Commission say about the UK Plan?

Last time (the 2003 Plans), the UK was praised for having clear targets and for good progress in tackling child poverty, but was challenged about the extent of income inequality. UK government

believed its policies for getting people into work were going very well but recognised it had a bigger problem of workless households than most other EU countries.

What's new and useful about the Plan Process?

As you can see, the common European aim to combat poverty, common objectives and common indicators for checking progress are firmly in place. Governments are now learning from each other in a structured on-going way and there is a role in the Plan process for all 'actors' (local government, people experiencing poverty and NGO's). At the European level, the European Anti-Poverty Network has been involved from the start - lobbying for the process, monitoring the implementation, getting engaged at a national level, pushing for a stronger process and better policies.

What are we doing in the UK?

The first Plan in 2001 was put in to the European Commission without much input from anybody but the civil servants who were writing it. Since then, there has been more involvement by other departments of UK government and the administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and by local government, but there is a lot more to do.

One part of the process that has changed quite a bit is the involvement of NGOs. In late 2000, the European Anti-Poverty Network UK set up a Social Policy Task Force (SPTF) to follow up the UK NAP Inclusion. Because the NAPs are a European process but one that aims to make an impact on national policy, the UK Coalition Against Poverty soon became a partner with EAPN and the SPTF became a joint working group of the two networks. Many of the members of these networks are grass-roots organisations such as Communities Against Poverty and local or regional NGOs or networks, such as the London Voluntary Sector Training Consortium and Merseyside Network for Europe. Today, members include people also from national NGOs such as Oxfam UK and Age Concern and national groups such as the Law Centres Federation.

We meet together as the SPTF about every two months to develop our views on the policies in the Plan and our strategy for improving both the Plan process and the Plan content. Every two months also, we meet with the civil servants at the Department of Work and Pensions who prepare the Plan. We are all intending to be in it for the 'long haul' to 2010. We have been building a level of trust with civil servants that gradually allows us to work better together as a group of people - but always being aware that none of us 'owns' the process and how it turns out at European and national level is not just up to us.

At the national level, we cannot change policy by ourselves - that's not our right. It is up to our politicians and to you the wider public. But we believe in participation as well as representation - we think getting into dialogue and working together - a voice as well as a vote - leads to better policy. We have had a bit of influence by providing government people with a better idea of what things look and feel like from the point of view of disadvantaged people and by making it clear what kind of policies and outcomes we think are unacceptable to people's human dignity. Last time

round we had a special focus on debt. Now we are starting to focus on income adequacy. We need your help - this is a tough one.

We are putting into action Objective 4 - mobilising all bodies. With DWP, in 2003-4 we set up a Participation Working Group (PWG) of people with experience of poverty, NGO workers and civil servants. The aim was to work out a way that the experience and views of disadvantaged people could be taken into account more directly when preparing the Plan. The PWG developed a 'toolkit' for supporting small groups to get their views put forward and this was launched late in 2004. SPTF then put in a successful bid for EU funding for a co-ordinator to help 'roll-out' the toolkit through a series of workshops across the UK. The results of these will feed into the preparation of the NAP 2006. The budget holder is Oxfam and the co-ordinator will take up the post in April 2005. On April 6, in Birmingham, we will have a national seminar to encourage different types of body to take up the toolkit and run their own workshops.

The NAP Inclusion process has helped to create a bit of space for a national dialogue on poverty and exclusion 'in the round' and on developing policies to combat it. It is helping us to learn how people from different backgrounds can work together on a national level, not just local, policy and on policy development, not just how it gets implemented.

Longer-term Aims

1. That poverty and exclusion as a whole (and not just specific issues) goes higher up the government agenda and real political energy and resources go into combating poverty as well as getting people into employment.
2. That the lessons we learn will lead to putting a much bigger, stronger, open policy development process into place in the UK.

If you want to know more about the NAP Inclusion, the work of the SPTF and the aims of the partner organisations and if you want to get involved then get in touch with us: -

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MONEY WITH MANAGEMENT FUND

SUSTAINABILITY FUND

The Money with Management (MwM) Sustainability Grant Fund is no longer open to **new** applications. The Fund has proven to be very popular and requests for funding have far outweighed the level of grant funding available.

Applications will be considered from applicants who have already contacted MSEI or Enablers, and

have an application in progress. Applications should be submitted to the MwM Fund Manager at Merseyside Expanding Horizons office to arrive no later than **5pm, 5th April 2005**. We will not be able to consider applications that are submitted after this deadline or are submitted incomplete.

START UP FUND

The Money with Management grants

programme is still open for applications from new or start up social enterprises and any interested organisations should contact Alan Johnson (MwM Fund Manager) on 0151-330-0552 or the Enablers on 0151-258-1058 (Weston Spirit Trading) or 0151-284-7728 (Blue Orchid). Full details and an application pack may be downloaded from the MSEI website at www.msei.org.uk.

Events Update

We are now full steam ahead on our Big Lottery Funded project which is all about helping voluntary and community organisations function as sustainably as they can, so that they can get on with effectively delivering social inclusion. Before Christmas we hosted two events, having taken feedback from the groups we support - most especially recipients of Social Capital Funding - to assess their development needs.

The first took place at the start of November in partnership with the Social Enterprise Network. More and more voluntary organisations are interested in the potential for social enterprise as a way forward for the future - trading to make money which can be used for their social purpose. But many groups simply feel at a loss to know how to even begin looking into moving in that direction.

The evening consisted of a quick introduction to social enterprise by Sector Champion Ben McCall, and then the inspiring stories of how the Kuumba Imaani Millennium Centre, and Lister Steps nursery began as small local voluntary sector organisations, and now run as fully functioning social enterprises. Attendees also had a chance to

choose from one of three mini workshops, around issues of finance, board development, and human resources with experts in the field.

People were generally very positive about what they had learned at the event. Many expressed a feeling that they would have liked more time to ask questions, and set the agenda for the evening themselves. In response to this we are currently planning an event in 2005 which will allow voluntary sector organisations to "Ask the Expert" on social enterprise - and so have the questions addressed that they feel really need answering.

If you would like to attend this event or would like a copy of the Briefing Paper we produced from the last event, please contact Maurice McCracken at Expanding Horizons.

MEH also hosted an event in partnership with Refugee Action, Liverpool CVS and National Lottery Awards for All, addressing the funding needs of Refugee and Asylum Seeker Community Organisations in Merseyside.

Asylum seekers and refugees can often be most effectively helped by

people of their own nationality, and the many peer support groups in Merseyside do an incredibly valuable job in helping those who are new to the UK. However, many of these groups do not take advantage of all the funding opportunities available to them due to issues of access and skills, and many work in isolation from other groups performing very similar roles.

Our event on 2nd December tried to address some of these issues by offering advice on funding, information about 3 accessible small grant funds, and some suggestions about partnership working, as well as plenty of time for people to meet each other over some good food. It was also great to have the refugee led group "Integration by Culture" take on much of the organisation and publicity for the event, and we hope to continue similar work with these partners in the future.

We would love to keep doing the best job we can in helping voluntary and community groups that tackle exclusion in so many innovative and exciting ways. We are currently planning our events programme for 2005 - if there are any events we could put on to help your organisation, please do let us know.

MEH and Partners are planning a series of "toolkit" events (see NAP article by Katherine Duffy) to ensure that small groups on Merseyside can get involved in the NAP inclusion process. For further information on planned Merseyside events please contact Rosina Ndukwe at Expanding Horizons, telephone: 0151 330 0552 or email: rosinandukwe@expandinghorizons.co.uk.

ChangeUp - the next step

Because of important and urgent developments around the ChangeUp agenda, I have decided not to run an interview this month but to provide information on what ChangeUp is, and what is happening on Merseyside. Further information will be provided in future editions of Network News and on our website (www.expandinghorizons.co.uk)

Colette Turner

Back in 2002 HM Treasury published its Cross Cutting Review and recommended that the voluntary and community sector and central and local government develop a shared strategy to underpin the capacity of the sector. Summer 2004 saw the arrival of ChangeUp - the Home Office Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector.

ChangeUp is wholly focussed upon investment in infrastructure bodies to catalyse improvement in services to the wider sector. An infrastructure organisation is a not for profit, constituted organisation whose primary focus is to provide services that maintain, sustain or develop frontline voluntary and community organisations. ChangeUp matters because in the words of the Home Office "it should be used as a planning tool for Government, funders and voluntary and community sector partners at all levels and in different sub-sectors...providing a point of reference for future thinking".

ChangeUp looks forward 10 years to a world in which

"the needs of frontline voluntary and community organisations will be met by support which is available nationwide, structured for maximum efficiency, offering excellent provision which is accessible to all while reflecting and promoting diversity, and is sustainably funded"

How do you do that then?

Well, things have to change from the way they are now, and to do that you need investment and you need a plan. On Greater Merseyside, at the invitation of Government Office for the North West, a ChangeUp Consortium of infrastructure bodies has come together to produce a sub-regional plan. Consortium members are: Churches Together on Merseyside, Community Foundation for Merseyside, Merseyside Expanding Horizons, Merseyside Network for Europe, Merseyside Third Technology Centre, Mersey Volunteer Bureau, and the six borough wide CVS of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton and Wirral.

By 31 March 2005 in response to the key

themes in ChangeUp, the Consortium will have written a plan that addresses the current and future support needs of voluntary and community organisations and proposed an associated programme of investment.

The key themes are:

- Performance improvement
- Workforce development & leadership
- ICT
- Governance
- Recruiting & developing volunteers
- Funding voluntary & community sector activity

This is where you come in.

There will be a series of events in March that explore the key proposals to be included in the Infrastructure Investment Plan for Greater Merseyside. If you have views on the type and form of services you would like to see provided to your organisation enabled by ChangeUp please do come along and have your say.

Time is tight. Government Office gave the go ahead to the Consortium in mid January giving just 10 weeks to complete the plan. Consortium members have been gathering evidence about the needs of the sector for months in the knowledge that this challenge was coming. What needs to happen before April is for that evidence to shape a programme of practical actions that will make a difference to infrastructure services. Your feedback on proposed actions and potential impacts will be invaluable.

Please make the time to be part of it.

ChangeUp Events

A programme of events is taking place across Greater Merseyside during the first two weeks of March to gather feedback and advice from the voluntary and community sector in response to ChangeUp.

Starting in the Mersey Maritime Museum on Tuesday 1 March and ending in the Wirral on Thursday 10 March, the programme will see frontline groups and organisations, whether large or small, with the opportunity to discuss and prioritise how ChangeUp should invest.

The first event is to consider how the six ChangeUp investment strands fit in terms of some of the key sub regional strategies and themes under which the sector already sits such as Objective 1, Digital Development and Social Inclusion. Having gained an overview of some present and future challenges delegates will be invited to join two workshops choosing from the themes of:

- Performance improvement

- Workforce development & leadership
- ICT
- Governance
- Recruiting & developing volunteers
- Funding voluntary and community sector activity

In the workshops delegates will consider how a range of proposed infrastructure activities might be best structured and delivered for maximum efficiency under ChangeUp

From 2-10 March events will take place in each of the six boroughs of Greater Merseyside where ChangeUp will be considered in relation to the vision of each Local Strategic Partnership. Again workshops will run at which the themes and the proposed activities will be the same but discussion will look at how access to services is ensured at local level and whether any locality has particular needs that differ from those of the sub region as a whole.

Government Office sees the Infrastructure Investment Plan that will emerge from these processes as an evolving document that will gradually crystallise over the coming year. Not taking part in these events does not preclude taking part in other processes at a later date, however, these are the events from which the first plan will be drawn and there is something to be said for being in at the beginning.

Event Dates

Sub Regional Events

1st March Merseyside wide, 1pm Mersey Maritime Museum, Liverpool

Boroughwide Events

2nd Mar St Helens, Tontine House
2nd Mar Knowsley, 1.30pm, Nutgrove Villa
4th Mar Liverpool (venue to be confirmed)
8th Mar Sefton (venue to be confirmed)
10th Mar Wirral, Birkenhead Town Hall
Halton (date not confirmed), Halton Voluntary Action Office

Further details on the boroughwide events will be displayed on our website in the coming weeks.

The scheduled events will last no longer than 3 hours and will include presentations on ChangeUp, workshops exploring its themes and then discussion on roundup and next steps.

For further information on any of these events please contact Ryan Forrest at Sefton CVS telephone 0151 920 0726, or email ryan.forrest@seftoncvcs.org.uk

Don't forget to visit our website www.expandinghorizons.co.uk to keep up to date with upcoming events.