

Third Sector Research Centre
Working Paper 138

The story of G:Up, a regional third sector network

Helen Kara

April 2016

Abstract

G:Up was a unique regional third sector infrastructure network that aimed to support all voluntary organisations working with children and young people in the West Midlands. It was conceived in 2000 and funded from 2003 to 2012. This paper tells the story of G:Up.

Two of G:Up's main aims were: to work collaboratively throughout the region in general and, in particular, to increase the participation of children and young people in planning, shaping, and running the services intended to help them. Despite a number of significant and pervasive barriers to partnership working, G:Up did manage to undertake and facilitate a great deal of effective collaborative activity. However, it was never as inclusive as it aspired to be, nor did it enable a noticeable increase in children and young people's participation.

A mixed-methods theoretical analysis is used to consider what theoretical sense can be made of the phenomenon of G:Up. Drawing on the work of Wolfgang Seibel, postmodernist theory, and the concept of liminality, we can see that G:Up contained the twin problems of infrastructure support for children's and young people's organisations in the West Midlands and the lack of children's and young people's participation in designing and managing those services. The network both failed to realise its two key ambitions and succeeded in achieving some of its aims. It resisted taking on an organisational identity, choosing to exist as a network in liminal space to maximise its flexibility, particularly in supporting learning.

G:Up's legacy resides within the learning it enabled for the region. This legacy is invisible and immeasurable yet still, in some ways, useful.

Keywords

Infrastructure, partnership, network, regional, participation, legacy

Acknowledgements

This paper was researched and written as part of an Associate Fellowship at TSRC. I am grateful to Rob Macmillan for very helpful comments on earlier drafts.

Contents

- Introduction 4**
- Case study: the story of G:Up 5**
 - The Early Years 5
 - The RSEF years 7
 - The ChangeUp project..... 10
 - The VCS Engage Years 11
 - The BASIS Years..... 12
 - The Final Stages..... 14
- Discussion14**
 - Partnership Working 15
 - Ambition 17
 - Participation of Children and Young People..... 17
 - Legacy 19
- Theorising G:Up19**
- Conclusion.....21**
- Appendix 1 - Known G:Up Funding 2003-2012.....23**
- Appendix 2 - Acronyms24**
- References.....25**
- Related TSRC Working Papers.....28**

Foreword

The field of support for voluntary and community action is changing rapidly in an unsettled political and economic context, in at least three ways. First, many national, regional and local voluntary sector ‘infrastructure’ organisations have come under considerable strain in recent years; these bodies, which include national umbrellas and membership bodies, and local agencies such as Councils for Voluntary Service, Volunteer Centres, and Rural Community Councils are adapting their approaches, business models and structures in response. Second, there is greater recognition of a broader ‘ecology’ of support involving a range of providers and networks, including freelance consultants, funders and peer networks. Third, there is a gradual and experimental emergence of a ‘managed market’ for support, based on targeted initiatives for building capabilities/capacity building, which aim to support ‘frontline’ organisations in a more bespoke ‘demand-led’ manner.

Together these and other trends make for a more diverse landscape of voluntary sector support, at least compared with the intentions behind previous large-scale centrally funded initiatives such as the *ChangeUp* programme from 2004 to 2011. In some areas existing ‘infrastructure’ support has been able to develop to continue providing strategic support for voluntary and community organisations and stakeholders in other sectors. In others funding constraints have meant that support organisations are struggling to meet their objectives, expectations and even to survive. Elsewhere support agencies have merged into or been taken over by other organisations, sometimes covering larger geographical scales. And in some areas support organisations have closed down altogether, leaving an absence of core support for voluntary and community action.

In order to make sense of the emerging landscape, where it has come from, and where it might lead, TSRC would like to publish a series of occasional reflective working papers on different aspects of the changing field of capacity building and infrastructure in the voluntary and community sector. In this paper Helen Kara, Associate Fellow at TSRC, provides a critical reflection on the story of G:Up, a regional infrastructure network which aimed to support voluntary organisations working with children and young people.

If you have a story to tell about how voluntary and community sector infrastructure has changed, and is changing, please do get in touch.

Rob Macmillan,
Research Fellow,
Third Sector Research Centre
r.macmillan@bham.ac.uk

Introduction

In the late 1990s, New Labour designated nine English regions: London, East of England, South East, South West, East Midlands, West Midlands, North East, North West, and Yorkshire & the Humber (Harris et al, 2004: 538). The aim was to devolve powers from central government to these regions, and a new Development Agency was established in each region. In the West Midlands, the Regional Development Agency was called Advantage West Midlands (AWM). In parallel with these Development Agencies, the voluntary sector also established new organisations at regional level, such as Regional Action West Midlands (RAWM). The wider voluntary sector had to work out how to operate within this completely new regional policy context (Harris et al, 2004: 527). New Labour were also encouraging work in partnership between organisations and sectors such that, in 2002, Stuart Etherington, Chief Executive of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), could describe partnership working as having 'become the norm' (Alcock, 2012). Given these two drivers, it is not surprising that the sector developed a number of regional partnerships and networks. There was also an increase in the provision of services to children and young people by and through the voluntary sector in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Milbourne, 2009: 277) and an increasing emphasis on the strengthening of voluntary sector infrastructure (Macmillan et al, 2014: 5). However, the West Midlands seems to have been the only region in which the voluntary sector developed a formal regional infrastructure network focusing specifically on organisations working with children and young people¹. This network was called G:Up.

In 2011, Gill et al offered a useful definition of third sector infrastructure in the children's and young people's sector (though their definition could apply to infrastructure in any sector). They said: 'Infrastructure membership organisations and networks operate at the national, local and regional levels to actively support and represent front-line organisations within the sector; and provide capacity-building training and skills development opportunities.' (Gill et al, 2011: 10) But even as Gill et al were publishing their work, the then recently formed coalition government of the UK was dismantling the regional structures of government, reducing the voluntary sector's income, and decimating its infrastructure (Milbourne and Cushman, 2014: 2). G:Up did not survive.

This working paper includes a start-to-finish case study of the G:Up network: how it came about, what it was, what it did, and why it came to an end. Case studies are frequently used in third sector literature (Scott and Russell, 2005: 1). Scott and Russell produced a typology of case studies, with three categories. The first is 'a short (100-150 word) description of an

¹ This was certainly a claim made regularly by those involved with G:Up, and I have not been able to find evidence of a similar network in any other region.

agency, its organisation and context... often highlighted or in a boxed presentation to enhance its impact' (ibid). The second is 'the 500 to 1,000 words of description used to celebrate or justify a particular organisation' (ibid). This study is intended to fall into the third category of Scott and Russell's case study typology: 'one which is integrated within an accessible framework, informed by carefully chosen concepts' (ibid: 2). This working paper will tell the story of the G:Up network from conception to demise, and then consider that story in more detail in the light of its key concepts: partnership working, ambition, participation, and legacy. Three carefully chosen theoretical perspectives will be used to focus on an aspect of the G:Up network. These are: Seibel's theory of 'mellow weakness' (1989), postmodernist theory, and the theory of liminality. The paper argues that using all three offers a fuller understanding of this complex case than could be reached with a single theoretical perspective.

The author worked with G:Up in three roles over its lifetime:

- 2005-6: evaluation of work funded through a government programme called 'ChangeUp' (Home Office, 2004)
- 2008: consultant support for funding bid to the Big Lottery Fund's Building and Sustaining Infrastructure Services (BASIS) programme
- 2010-12: evaluation of work funded by BASIS.

As well as main tranches of funding from ChangeUp, VCS Engage (another government programme), and BASIS, G:Up also secured smaller pieces of funding from a range of sources. Those we know of are shown in a table in appendix 1, though there may have been others. The acronyms used in this report are also listed in appendix 2.

Case study: the story of G:Up

Unless otherwise stated, the information in this case study is drawn from the evaluation reports for the ChangeUp and BASIS funded work (Kara, 2006 and Kara, 2012²).

The Early Years

G:Up was inspired by a chain of occurrences beginning with a report called *Firm Foundations* (Wright and Jeffs, 1999). This report was commissioned by the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) to assess the infrastructure needs of the voluntary youth sector and make recommendations for development. The report recognised that New Labour's regionalisation agenda offered possibilities for new regional structures, and it also

² These reports were both published and openly accessible on the G:Up website at www.gup.org.uk although, at the time of writing, only the second is still available online.

emphasised the need for partnership working. As a result, NCVYS began to foster partnership structures in various places and in various ways. In the West Midlands, NCVYS began to work on infrastructure development for the youth sector in the region with two new bodies: RAWM, the regional infrastructure body for the whole of the third sector, and the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM). GOWM had separate teams of people working on Connexions (multi-disciplinary support for 13–18 year olds), the Children's Fund (multi-disciplinary support for 8–13 year olds) and Sure Start (multi-disciplinary support for younger children and babies, and their families), so GOWM had a keen interest in third sector provision for children and young people.

While personal relationships remained cordial, professional partnership working was more difficult. GOWM had twinned itself with national Connexions around the issue of the voluntary sector, but GOWM didn't seem to want to be involved in a partnership with RAWM or with the voluntary sector through RAWM. GOWM wanted RAWM to provide infrastructure services – without any extra resources – and to speak for the sector. So RAWM eventually pulled away from that relationship, which was continued by NCVYS and others. This was the first of many difficulties with partnership working.

NCVYS was trying to influence change as a national organisation, and the West Midlands branch received some support from the National Council for Voluntary Child Care Organisations (NCVCCO³), primarily through NCVCCO's national development officer. However, as this national role had a very large remit, it proved difficult for NCVYS to form a useful ongoing partnership for their work at regional level. NCVYS wanted to develop infrastructure support in the West Midlands and to act as a voice for the youth sector. As meetings between NCVYS and RAWM continued, people realised that there was no coherent collaborative approach in the West Midlands to looking at engagement of the youth sector and young people in the regional agenda, and began to discuss ways of filling this gap. RAWM felt very strongly that there was a need to look at the wider agenda. This would mean including children and young people aged 0–25, rather than perpetuating the traditional agency-led age group divisions as reflected in the Government's structural division between Connexions, Children's Fund, and Sure Start, because in reality many voluntary sector organisations and groups worked across much or all of this age range. It would also mean including all agencies that worked with and for children and young people, i.e. agencies from the statutory and private sectors as well as those from the voluntary sector. NCVYS agreed with this, and together they formed a vision of a collaborative strategic approach to regional infrastructure taken by a partnership involving children, young people and all the organisations who worked with them. Later, other partners became involved in

³ In 2008 NCVCCO became Children England

these discussions, including NCVCCO, the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP), the West Midlands Voluntary Youth Sector Forum (WMVYSF), and some local Councils for Voluntary Youth Services (CVYSs).

Initial attempts were made to build a network simply by working in partnership, but this was the first ambition that proved unrealistic. The partnership was working well, but all those involved had full-time jobs already, and it quickly became apparent that if the network was to move forward, dedicated staff time was needed. So a decision was taken to apply for funding with a view to appointing a co-ordinator for the network, though partners were adamant that it should remain a network and not become an organisation. In 2003 an opportunity arose in the shape of Regional Strategic Engagement Fund (RSEF) money. The exact origins and aims of this funding is now unclear, though we do know that it was distributed by AWM and RAWM (WMFF 2006:3) and enabled nine thematic regional networks to be set up in the West Midlands (WMFF 2007:7), of which G:Up was one and the West Midlands Faith Forum (WMFF) another. NCVYS prepared a bid with support from RAWM. The stated aim was 'to create a regional network of voluntary and community sector organisations working with children, young people and young adults that can influence regional and sub-regional policy, strategy and service delivery, ensuring that the involvement of children, young people and young adults in decision making processes is a key principle.' The intended outcome was stated as: 'In the West Midlands Region the VCS⁴ are fully committed to working with young people as partners, and young people are able to have their voice heard in decision making processes in the region.' This ambitious proposal put participation firmly at the core of G:Up's work, alongside partnership working. The application was successful and, in December 2003, NCVYS was awarded £99,000 over three years: £11,000 for 2003/4, £38,000 for 2004/5 and £50,000 for 2005/6.

The RSEF years

A Birmingham-based regional youth organisation (RYO) became the accountable body for the funding. A steering group was set up for the project involving NCVYS, RAWM, UKYP, and three CVYSs. In April 2004, a Youth Involvement Officer (YIO) was appointed, through a two-day recruitment process involving young people as part of the assessment. The YIO was supported by RYO and started work in May 2004.

During the YIO's initial interview for the job concerns were raised about the breadth of the remit. Early experiences confirmed these concerns, as huge expectations had been raised by the very ambitious funding bid. People wanted the YIO to advise them about how to involve young people, sort out every youth participation problem, and engage the entire

⁴ Voluntary and community sector

sector – and all with a tiny operational budget. It was as though the whole problem of youth participation immediately belonged to G:Up. The YIO met with as many people as she could to find out what they wanted, and then wrote a workplan which met with universal approval. However, as she began to implement the workplan, she found that it meant different things to different people. Even the people who had collaborated on the funding bid seemed to have developed different ideas about what the project would achieve. This shows one of the difficulties of partnership working in practice.

In August 2004, after three months in post, the YIO wrote a discussion paper called 'Getting Real' that raised a series of questions needing decisions or clarification with the aim of setting some realistic goals. These included:

- What of the original bid (considering time and resources available) was most important? Which age group/policy areas/geographical location/other factors? What were realistic expectations for March 2005?
- What was the role of the accountable body?
- What was RAWM's role in this project? Where did WMVYSF fit in?
- To whom should the YIO have turned for what support? To whom was she accountable for what?
- How should the YIO and RYO have approached this work and interpreted the aims and objectives of the project? The YIO felt that such a broad project of disparate parts required a common thread or focus for the work to feed into. What should that have been? An OCN⁵ learning programme? An online forum and virtual resource centre? A CD-ROM? Something else?

These questions demonstrate the impact of existing inter-organisational tensions on a new partnership project. A meeting was held between the YIO, NCVYS and RAWM with the aim of addressing these questions, and some were clarified, such as the question of accountability. Four core issues were identified: changes to young people's services, skills, housing, and governance. Five key areas of work were also identified: economic inclusion, active citizenship, regenerating communities, cohesive communities, and crime and disorder. It was acknowledged that this was still a very big agenda and 'while we might have higher ambitions, closer collaboration regionally between children's and young people's organisations would in itself be a big achievement.' It was agreed that further funding would be required for the current plans to be achieved, particularly as they represented a significant development in ambition from the original RSEF-funded purpose. However, it was unclear which organisation would be able to host a bid – another partnership working glitch.

⁵ Open College Network

The YIO was also being asked to work in partnership with others who were preparing a 'regional strategic engagement framework' for children and young people. This fitted with G:Up's mission, but wasn't part of its already over-ambitious work plan. Nevertheless, the YIO agreed to help – and ended up doing most of the work, due to other people's holidays and sickness absence. There were also a number of examples of failed communication which hampered the project's progress. These were spread quite evenly around the project, rather than coming from a particular source or sources. However, they do demonstrate that clear communication in partnership working can be extremely difficult, and that failed communication can be very destructive to people's emotions and motivations.

The RSEF activity reports covering this period show an enormous amount of work being done: meetings attended, groups formed, promotional materials developed, support and consultation offered to organizations and groups, information shared, strategies developed, links formed, websites created, and work promoted at regional, national and European events and conferences. In particular, an event held in the West Midlands in early 2005 was designed to help define the partnership and 'ensure that future regional activity is grounded in practice and experience'. The aim was to 'start to explore if and how regional activity relates to children and young people and the voluntary and community organisations working with them' and to 'test the possibility of bringing children's and youth organisations together to share experiences and create a powerful voice'. This event was well attended by youth workers and decision-makers. As a result, a new steering group was set up for G:Up, with people interested in working on regional issues, and this new partnership took on the responsibility of sustaining the participatory network project.

In April 2005, the steering group was alerted to the opportunity of bidding for ChangeUp funding. ChangeUp was a 10-year strategy designed to strengthen infrastructure support for the voluntary and community sector, particularly through capacity building. Funding was channelled through a variety of national, regional and local mechanisms. The G:Up steering group became aware of a two-year funding stream running from 2004 to 2006 administered through regional Government offices, in this case GOWM. Another collaborative event was held in mid-2005 to promote G:Up's work and discuss its future. At this event, the decision was taken to bid for ChangeUp funding. By this time, the steering group had developed some momentum, helped by a small amount of funding from RAWM for regeneration work, and the development of a dedicated website for G:Up. The group wrote the ChangeUp bid collectively, and shared it with NCVCCO and WMVYSF who endorsed the work. The stated aim was to build capacity to co-ordinate and support the work of the voluntary sector, and enhance partnerships with statutory bodies, across the region. The work was intended to be far-reaching and varied, with voluntary organisations in the region being commissioned to do specific pieces of work for the sector. So partnership working was at the core here, though

there was also an explicit element for participation. The bid was successful and the project was awarded £200,000 for the period September 2005 to June 2006 – only ten months, in practice, to deliver a huge amount of work.

The ChangeUp project

The overall aim was to support and develop the infrastructure of the children and young people's voluntary and community sector in the West Midlands. This work covered projects in 10 specific areas:

1. Children and young people's participation
2. Children's trusts
3. Diversity and outreach
4. Governance
5. Information and communication technology (ICT)
6. Strategic partnership and policy work
7. Management
8. Workforce development
9. Regeneration and sustainable communities
10. Sustainable funding.

The work was managed by six 'delivery groups', whose aims addressed most of the 10 areas specified above. The work of the delivery groups did not map directly onto the 10 specific areas but, broadly, the relationship was as follows:

1. Children and young people's delivery group: areas 1 and 6 from above list
2. Diversity and outreach delivery group: area 3
3. Governance delivery group: areas 1 and 4
4. ICT delivery group: areas 5 and 8
5. WMVYSF delivery group: area 2
6. NCVCCO delivery group: to focus on statutory commissioning processes.

These groups, in turn, were managed by the steering group. The steering group had overall responsibility for all 10 of the specific areas and specific responsibility for areas 7, 8, 9 and 10. A lot of the day-to-day work was done by network member organisations which were commissioned to do specific tasks funded by part of the ChangeUp grant. Overall, the steering group oversaw the commissioning of 47 separate pieces of work, which helped to distribute the ChangeUp resources more widely through the sector. Each delivery group included a representative from the steering group, who took an active role in commissioning

work to be managed by that delivery group, and kept the steering group informed of progress. This level of personal commitment from steering group members is particularly impressive given that each of them already had a demanding full-time job.

The stated ethos was to collaborate and share, rather than to compete, both within and beyond the sector. This was to be done through an inclusive network, which grew from six to over 100 members in one year. However, it was noticeable that the delivery groups based on existing networks – numbers 5 and 6 in the above list of delivery groups – were considerably more successful than the other four delivery groups which had been brought together specifically for the ChangeUp funded work. It seems logical that work with existing partnerships could be more effective more quickly than setting up new partnerships.

Despite the challenging timescale and complex structure, the ChangeUp work was largely successful to the extent that most of the commissioned work was undertaken as planned, though the impact of that work was not assessed. The network did enable small grass-roots groups to contribute to strategic regional partnership working, largely because it was able to pay for expenses and time to attend meetings. However, the extent of the network's inclusivity was never fully assessed, and it was not successful in involving children and young people in strategic work. The evaluation report shows evidence of over-ambition and difficulties in collaboration – although these problems may have been caused, and/or exacerbated, by the tight funding schedule (National Audit Office, 2009a: 8). The departure of the YIO at the end of her contract in March 2006 left the steering group once again holding the reins. Continuation funding of £15,000 was awarded for March to September 2006, which helped the delivery groups to finish some of the work that would otherwise have been left unfinished. Overall, this work laid some solid foundations for the development of voluntary sector infrastructure for children's and young people's services in the region. However, it was unclear whether or how the work funded by ChangeUp would be taken forward in the absence of further funding.

The stated position of the steering group was, once again, that they wanted G:Up to remain as a participatory network rather than taking on staff and offices and becoming a pseudo-organisation. A G:Up member regional organisation was appointed to take on a part-time secretariat role for the network. However, trying to sustain a voluntary sector network without dedicated human or financial resources proved impossible, and the steering group began to look for ways to generate further funding.

The VCS Engage Years

There are no clear records of what happened over the next couple of years, although we do know that G:Up won the West Midlands regional contract to deliver VCS Engage from

2007. This was a regional component of a national project to enable the voluntary sector to engage with the Every Child Matters policy agenda (DfES, 2004), and was funded by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), via Children England, until January 2011. A business plan from mid-2009 shows that VCS Engage was the primary source of income for G:Up at that time. This enabled the network to work on:

- Communication, networking, and providing regular – largely web-based – information for members and others
- Supporting smaller VCS organisations and those working with under-represented groups and communities
- Developing strategic partnerships at national, regional and local levels
- Working to improve the voice and influence of all organisations in the voluntary children and young people's sub-sector
- Workforce development
- Young people's participation.

The parallels with the work funded by ChangeUp are notable and interesting. However, due to the lack of available records, we have no details of what this work involved, or of its outcomes.

The BASIS Years

BASIS was a Big Lottery Fund funding programme focused on building and sustaining infrastructure services for the voluntary sector. G:Up secured a BASIS grant in late 2008, with funding of £124,692 in 2009-10, £118,498 in 2010-11, and £115,652 in 2011-12. This was for a project called G:XL which began in 2009. Again, RYO was the accountable body. It also housed the small staff team, and provided line management functions for the G:XL project manager. This caused some confusion, with people unsure where the boundaries lay between RYO, G:Up, and G:XL. Also again, the plan was to commission out work to voluntary sector organisations, in five work streams:

1. Quality Standards – to map and collate information on quality standards, resources and good practice; produce a self-assessment toolkit; and ensure that infrastructure organisations and their network members were trained, had access to and were using the self-assessment toolkit, action planning and signposting service.
2. Training and Workforce Development – to map and collate information on training and development needs and provision, and ensure that infrastructure organisations and their network members had access to and were using the regional collaborative training and development calendar.

3. Voice and Influence – to identify the needs and views of voluntary sector children's and young people's organisations and of the young people who used their services; encourage and support the engagement of representatives of voluntary sector children's and young people's organisations in influencing processes and decisions regarding policy, planning and funding; whilst encouraging and supporting young people's participation through structures and opportunities which enabled them to influence the design and delivery of services and other issues.
4. Information and Communication – to map, analyse and collate information needs of the voluntary sector children and young people's sub-sector and create mechanisms to support members in their needs through a central information hub; redevelop the G:Up website to accommodate the needs of the sector and work streams; establish directories, libraries, news and interactive media within the website; train members in ways of contributing to the new website.
5. Collaborative Purchasing – to support and encourage the development of partnership approaches which would produce shared learning, add value, and address economies of scale by developing collaborative models for bidding and tendering and for the procurement of materials and services, including 'back office' functions.

It is interesting that participation is occupying an even smaller proportion of the plans than it did with the work funded by ChangeUp. Also, there is less emphasis on partnership working. It is not clear whether this was because, by 2008, partnership working was taken more for granted than in earlier years, or because the difficulties in partnership working had led the network to place more emphasis on staff-led work, or for some other reason.

As with the work funded by ChangeUp, there was a steering group overseeing the work, but it proved difficult to recruit to the group because everyone wanted to be eligible to be commissioned for work and being on the steering group created conflicts of interest. Luckily the grant funded four paid staff who effectively managed the whole project.

As with ChangeUp, the overall vision of G:XL was that it would work with voluntary sector infrastructure organisations working with children and young people, and that these infrastructure organisations would, in turn, work with their own members. This did happen, though G:XL also ended up working directly with some grass-roots organisations who became members of G:Up. This was partly because the ethos of collaboration was still permeating the work of the network. However, G:XL experienced much less involvement from G:Up's members than was hoped or expected. This was due to a radical change of political climate which saw a change in policy on regionalisation following the transfer of power from Labour to the coalition government in May 2010, with a concomitant reduction in

associated funding⁶. In some cases, this had a detrimental effect on the commissioned work, which varied in quality and quantity from excellent to non-existent. In particular, the collaborative purchasing and voice/influence work streams (which included the participation element) appeared to have had very little impact. The information and communication workstream was managed in-house by the paid staff, and this was by far the most successful of the five workstreams.

The Final Stages

The BASIS funding came to an end in October 2012, its promise of sustainability unkept. Meetings were held in September and October 2012 to decide on the future of G:Up. In September there were 17 people present, including G:Up staff, and chief executives and other senior people from voluntary sector organisations in the West Midlands. The notes of this meeting state that there was unanimous recognition of the importance of G:Up in the region and a wish to see it continue. Children England (formerly NCVCCO) offered six months' support to March 2013, in the form of convening and hosting meetings, to enable discussions about how to go forward. RAWM and NCVYS also offered to stay involved and continue to support G:Up. There was then an online voting process, in which over one-third of G:Up's 90 membership organisations voted in favour of the plans, with 0–5 voting 'no' to each proposal, and the rest not voting. The plans were ratified at the AGM in October 2012, and three people were voted onto the steering group to join the representatives of Children England, NCVYS and RAWM. This group of six people was tasked with identifying and recommending a way forward for G:Up by March 2013.

There are no further records, so it seems likely that this group was not able to find a way forward. Nothing has been posted onto the G:Up website since October 2012. The contact form appears to be working, but a message sent in January 2015 received no reply. At the time of writing, in late 2015, G:Up's most recent tweet from its account @GupWestMidlands was dated 17 October 2012. The web domain is registered until June 2016, so unless some action is taken to preserve it, G:Up's website is likely to disappear after that date. Internet searches revealed no further information, and the author would be likely to know from her networks if G:Up had been revived, so we can only assume that G:Up is now defunct.

Discussion

Having followed the story of the G:Up network from start to finish, what broader sense can we make of the case study in its historical context? Commentators at the time focused on

⁶ <http://www.wmfaithsforum.org.uk/home4/index.php/about-the-forum-mainmenu-44> viewed 19.8.15

partnership working and support for local organisations. There was also a debate about whether infrastructure at regional level provided much-needed support or an unwelcome increase in complexity. For example, in 2008 the Conservative Party in opposition expressed their frustration with 'Labour's fixation with "regional infrastructure"' in their policy green paper on voluntary action (Conservative Party, 2008: 37). In their view, regional infrastructure networks like G:Up created an irrelevant layer of unnecessary bureaucracy, diverting much-needed resources and support from organisations working at local level. The National Audit Office researched the impact of ChangeUp and found that partnership working had improved, and that this had benefited local organisations, though the impact on those organisations was varied (National Audit Office, 2009b: 10). And the Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC) worked with other organisations on an evaluation of ChangeUp, which also found an improvement in partnership working. Further, in direct opposition to the Conservative view, this evaluation found 'strong evidence' that infrastructure support such as that provided by G:Up was 'needed... appreciated and... had a positive influence on the success of local organisations.' (TSRC, 2009: 9). Again, TSRC and their colleagues found that the extent of this varied between different areas. However, they were able to conclude that, 'General impacts on frontline organisations which [were] considered to be valuable were that ChangeUp had ensured that more local support has been arranged for some frontline organisations than would otherwise be the case, that many frontline organisations have been helped to bid for funding and contracts as a result of the support available, and that support has helped to improve the networking of some frontline TSOs.' (ibid: 10) This mirrors the picture of G:Up in the ChangeUp years: regional, complex, and bureaucratic, making improvements to partnership working, with some positive impact on some local organisations. But there was more to it than that. This case study suggests that, alongside partnership working, ambition, participation, and legacy were also important issues.

Partnership Working

Previously identified barriers to regional partnership working involving the voluntary sector include lack of time, insufficient money, geography, and staff availability (Harris et al, 2004) and competitive bidding and commissioning (Milbourne, 2009). All of these barriers caused difficulties for G:Up, as did problems with communication.

Lack of time often seemed to be a barrier for G:Up, particularly in the periods when there were no paid staff. It was also an obstacle when there were paid staff, particularly for the ChangeUp-funded YIO with a massive remit. Money was a problem here too: although the YIO's post was funded, there was only a minute operational budget. The need to chase future funding was a perennial issue for the network. But money was also an enabler,

especially in the way it was used by G:Up: to pay for staff time and expenses to attend network meetings and events. This helped reduce the barrier of staff availability, although it could not eradicate that completely.

Geography was also a barrier for G:Up. The West Midlands region covers over 5,000 square miles, with seven cities (Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Hereford, Stoke-on-Trent, Worcester, and Lichfield), over 20 sizeable towns, and good transport routes. Yet the vast majority of G:Up's meetings and events were held in Birmingham. This caused access problems for people from rural areas and from the further-flung urban areas, which, in turn, will have hampered communication within the network (Jones et al, 2010: 6).

Communication was a pervasive problem for G:Up. Throughout the network's lifetime, there were continual misunderstandings, communication breakdowns, and renegotiations. It was also continually difficult for G:Up to communicate its identity and intentions, a problem faced by other recipients of ChangeUp funding (TSRC, 2009: 8). As G:Up was a regional voluntary sector infrastructure network of members, which were children and young people's voluntary sector infrastructure organisations, and the network was trying to build the capacity and increase the sustainability of the children and young people's voluntary sector infrastructure across the region, the difficulty communicating identity and intentions is perhaps not surprising. The description doesn't exactly roll off the tongue, and is packed with complex abstract concepts. Also, while G:Up's projects were always multi-faceted, G:Up rarely ran more than one project at a time, which often led to conflation of the network with its project.

Given all the barriers, it is laudable that G:Up maintained its collaborative ethos and managed to do so much successful partnership working. But the network was only inclusive up to a point. G:Up aimed to work through its membership, yet much of this was by electronic communication, from G:Up to its membership and then from its membership to their members. This will necessarily have excluded (a) organisations and groups that weren't members of anything, unless they were in contact with G:Up directly (some were, but only a handful) and (b) organisations having difficulty with, or not able to access, electronic communication. Also, simply emailing people does not even constitute collaboration, let alone inclusion.

G:Up did commission work from smaller organisations, something that larger commissioning bodies regularly fail to do (Milbourne, 2009: 290). However, the selection process for those organisations was often rushed, and there were conflicts of interest. It was not an entirely open, accessible, process, and this reduced levels of trust, both within and of the network. This is not unusual in competitive commissioning involving the voluntary sector (Stafford, 2012: 263) and shows some of the limitations of partnership working.

Professional collaborations are often described in terms of partnerships between organisations. However, the success or failure of such collaborations actually depends on the quality of individual relationships between people, as collaboration requires 'reciprocal interdependence' (Keast and Mandell, 2014: 12). Yet while collaborative work inevitably involves compromise and reliance on the actions of others, it does not necessarily involve a change in the ambitions of the individual people or organisations involved (Keast and Mandell, 2014: 12). This can lead to difficulties when there is conflict between the ambitions of a collaboration, and the ambitions of its individual member organisations and/or their representatives. In the work of G:Up, these conflicts seem to have come into sharpest focus when money was at stake. G:Up had to compete for its own funding, sometimes competing directly with member or partner organisations. Also, G:Up used primarily competitive processes for the work it commissioned with the larger tranches of funding it received. This caused conflicts of interest and made it difficult for some network members to be as fully involved as they would have liked in G:Up's partnership working.

Ambition

G:Up's ambitions were often very optimistic, even idealistic, and many proved unworkable. The network always operated collaboratively up to a point, but was never the fully inclusive network it aspired to be. Also, the network's ambition to enable children and young people's participation in strategic decision-making at regional level was never realised. And there were a number of other ambitions specific to particular funding streams which also turned out not to be viable. For example, the BASIS work on collaborative purchasing, designed to reduce costs for individual organisations by developing collaborative models for procuring 'back office' functions, was largely ineffective. This is by no means unique to G:Up, as other voluntary sector networks have also found collaborative purchasing of back office functions difficult to achieve (Stafford, 2012: 262). G:Up also aimed to leave a tangible legacy in the region but, perhaps as a result of the gulf between ambition and achievement, G:Up's legacy is hard to identify and impossible to measure.

Participation of Children and Young People

There is now a sizeable body of evidence demonstrating that children and young people are able to influence and participate in strategic decision-making in the public policy arena (Checkoway et al, 2005). Despite this, they are woefully under-represented in such processes (Checkoway, 2011), something G:Up recognised from the start. G:Up acknowledged the competence of children and young people as active citizens, repeatedly declared its intention and willingness to enable their involvement in strategic decision-making

at a regional level, and secured funds to support that work. Yet even with dedication, commitment, and resources, G:Up was unable to achieve, or even partially achieve, their aim.

It is interesting to consider some of the potential reasons for this. In the early 1990s, Roger Hart developed a 'ladder' of young people's participation (McCartan et al, 2012: 284). This had eight 'rungs' representing levels of involvement, from coerced involvement without interest to full and equitable involvement. This 'ladder' can be represented in a table, as follows:

Rung	Nature of children and young people's involvement
8 (top)	Full involvement equally shared with adults
7	Action generated and led by children and young people
6	Action generated by adults, decisions shared with children and young people
5	Action generated and decisions taken by adults, children and young people informed and consulted
4	Action generated and decisions taken by adults, children and young people informed
3	Action generated and decisions taken by adults with tokenistic involvement of children and young people
2	Action generated and decisions taken by adults with lip-service paid to the involvement of children and young people
1 (bottom)	Children and young people coerced into 'involvement' by adults

Using this 'ladder', it is possible to say that G:Up aimed to come in at level 4 and move rapidly through level 5 to level 6. But, however much adults might like children and young people to be involved with regional strategic decision-making, this may not in fact be something that interests the children and young people themselves. 'Too often the issues expressed by youth are the ones given to them by adult authorities who care about them... Adult caring is a precious resource worldwide, but it does not necessarily translate into youth participation.' (Checkoway, 2011: 342). Children and young people are more likely to participate in action on issues they themselves have identified as important and relevant. For example, children and young people are often interested in participating in decision-making about education in general, and schools in particular, which are clearly relevant to their lives (Checkoway and Richards-Schuster, 2006). It may be that children and young people in the West Midlands, between 2003 and 2012, did not view participation in regional strategic decision-making as of any interest to them. The approach taken in Australia, of mapping and responding to young people's priorities (Head, 2011: 545), might have been helpful here.

Also, the formality and structures of public engagement can be a barrier to involving children and young people in decision-making. Children and young people readily engage in

informal participation within their families and communities, and make a valuable contribution (Head, 2011: 542-3). However, more formal structures, designed by and for adults, find it difficult to accommodate children and young people, e.g. by operating outside school hours. Also, children and young people do not feel at home within the formal structures of meetings with agendas in offices where most decisions about regional policy are made. There is scope for creative approaches to involving children and young people with these processes, but these require awareness, resources, and ultimately a change in procedures to enable a new way of operating (ibid: 546). Stoecklin states that 'As long as organizations remain unaware of – or unwilling to work on – the hidden frameworks used in intervention, their capacities to develop a more bottom-up line will not improve.' (2012: 455) There is no evidence that G:Up thought in these terms; the network aimed to increase the participation of children and young people within existing systems, rather than to identify and challenge the barriers to that participation. And sadly, G:Up only reached levels 2 and 3 of Roger Hart's 'ladder' above.

Legacy

G:Up did a lot of capacity building. It brought in resources and used them to improve individual skills and organisational resources, particularly – but not exclusively – in information technology. G:Up did make some small but real differences to practice, such as improving statutory sector commissioning practices through the Change-Up funded partnership work, and working to improve quality in the voluntary sector through the BASIS-funded toolkit. The work done by G:Up will have left some kind of a legacy in the region, though that would have been very difficult to measure at the time and is probably impossible from this distance. We can perhaps say that the legacy is likely to be strongest in or near Birmingham, where most of the activity took place; others have also found that this type of 'regional' activity is, in fact, usually concentrated in the 'main conurbation of the region' (Harris et al, 2004: 533). And G:Up's legacy will inevitably diminish with time, as the capacity built is used up, becomes obsolete, or leaves with people who move out of the sector. When G:Up's website disappears, in or after June 2016, there will be no visible legacy left from twelve years of work and over three-quarters of a million pounds in funding.

Theorising G:Up

We have reviewed G:Up's history in terms of partnership working, ambition, participation and legacy. Here we use three theoretical approaches to move beyond these themes and consider what theoretical sense we can make of the phenomenon.

Wolfgang Seibel's theory of 'mellow weakness' suggests that the function of third sector organisations is not to solve social and political problems, but to contain them. He suggests

that governments' apparent success in containing intractable problems masks their failure to tackle those problems. 'Governments can appear to be doing something about these problems and the failure of their success [sic] can then be blurred and if necessary, blamed on the peculiar functioning of nonprofit organizations' (Seibel, 1989: 187). Seibel suggests that some social and political problems cannot be solved, and that their containment by the third sector serves to maintain a stable political system (ibid: 190). Seibel further suggests that failure is 'a systematic element of organizational culture' (1996: 1020). He says 'The values of efficiency and accountability provide the cultural backbone of organizational modernity' (ibid) and, as a result, people think inefficiency and failure are random and unusual occurrences, while in fact they're endemic. For Seibel, it is in the third sector that 'permanently failing organizations have a solid chance to survive' (ibid), if they can mobilize enough resources.

Looked at through this theoretical lens, we can see that G:Up managed to mobilize enough resources to survive for 12 years. During that time, in Seibel's terms, the network was repeatedly funded to 'contain' the twin problems of infrastructure support for local organisations working with children and young people in the West Midlands, and children's lack of agency in social structures which affect them. G:Up consistently failed to realise its own ambitions – though the story is not so simple, because it did succeed in achieving some of its aims. So this could be seen as an example of 'the failure of their success' (Seibel, 1989: 187).

Another point where G:Up departs from Seibel's vision is that it was never an organization – or, at least, it never wanted to define itself as one. It would be possible to argue that it was an organization: at least during the G:XL years, when it had a sizeable budget and a team of staff working from a dedicated office, and probably at other times too. But G:Up was always adamant that it was a network, accountable to a wide constituency of members from across the region.

Postmodernist theory rejects binaries such as 'organization' and 'not organization'. It regards such distinctions as socially constructed, based on cultural assumptions, and uses deconstruction to look at them afresh (Frost and Elichaooff, 2014: 43). So, in postmodernist terms, G:Up can be both organization and network, failure and success. This makes sense because, although G:Up failed to realise its overarching ambitions, it did succeed in achieving many of its more minor aims. Even G:Up's apparently solid identity as 'regional' can be deconstructed, because we have seen that some members represented organizations at national level, while others came from very local organizations. Also, it is likely that most of its impact was felt in, and close to, Birmingham. So the postmodernist lens lets us see that in fact G:Up was local, regional, and national.

This leads us to the concept of liminality, introduced into the social sciences over 100 years ago by the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep, and given a higher profile by Victor Turner in the 1960s (Thomassen, 2009: 5,14). A 'liminal space' is a metaphorical space that exists 'betwixt and between' other, more clearly defined, spaces (Turner, 1967, cited in Thomassen, 2009: 14). It is a space of uncertainty and transition, where new and sometimes troublesome concepts are experienced, which offers great creative potential, and where learning often takes place (Land et al, 2014: 201-2).

Voluntary sector infrastructure both occupies and fosters liminal space. It exists to work 'betwixt and between' voluntary and statutory sector organisations, representing them to each other in a constantly shifting process of translation and interpretation. Infrastructure also exists to enable liminal space for individuals through providing learning opportunities from one-off pieces of advice to formal accredited courses. So G:Up, as an infrastructure provider, could be seen as embodying this kind of liminality.

G:Up existed 'betwixt and between' in a number of dimensions: between local and national, between operational and strategic, and, as a network, between organisations. As a recipient of intermittent short-term funding, G:Up was always in transition. Also, being a network rather than an organisation embodies another kind of liminality. Networks seem more ephemeral, more transitory, than organisations – and so it proved with G:Up. Despite all the commitment, dedication, funding, employment, commissioning, capacity building, and outputs, G:Up only ever existed in the interstices of public provision; in liminal space.

Conclusion

For ten years, from 2003 to 2012, G:Up was a significant presence in the West Midlands voluntary sector. It was an infrastructure provider that received pots of funding ranging in size from £1,000 to £200,000, which it used to enrich and enhance other voluntary sector organisations, particularly other infrastructure providers. The rationale was that supporting other infrastructure providers would enable them, in turn, to support local organisations more effectively.

A mixed-methods theoretical analysis suggests that, during those ten years, G:Up contained the twin problems of infrastructure support for local organisations working with children and young people in the West Midlands, and children's lack of agency in social structures which affect them. The network failed and succeeded simultaneously: failing to realise its ambitions for children's and young people's participation in regional decision-making structures, and for inclusive partnership working, while succeeding in achieving some of its aims. It resisted taking on an organisational identity, preferring to exist as a network in liminal space, where it could support learning more flexibly.

This case study demonstrates that commitment to partnership and inclusion isn't enough to make sure inclusive collaboration actually happens, even when supported by financial resources. As far as we know, G:Up met the vast majority of its funding targets – certainly this was the case for ChangeUp and BASIS – yet those targets didn't ensure full collaboration or inclusion. Between the example of G:Up and the evidence in the literature, we can tentatively conclude that, to overcome the obstacles to collaboration and inclusion, more is needed than commitment and financial resources. A strategic approach is also needed, which should involve careful consideration of the context, its obstacles, and how they can best be overcome (Keast and Mandell, 2014: 26). This should be heeded by funders, commissioners, and government officials – everyone, in fact, who exhorts others to work inclusively in partnership.

While the network's visible legacy is tiny and dwindling, G:Up does leave a legacy of learning. This exists in liminal space, within individuals, groups, and organisations, and online. G:Up's legacy is invisible and immeasurable yet still, in some ways, useful.

Appendix 1 - Known G:Up Funding 2003-2012

Year	Funding	Amount
2003	RSEF funding Dec 03-Mar 04	£11,000
2004	RSEF funding Apr 04-Mar 05	£38,000
2005	RSEF funding Apr 05-Mar 06	£50,000
2005	Funding from RAWM for regeneration work	Not known
2005	Change-Up funding for six months to 2006	£200,000
2006	Continuation funding Mar 06-Sep 06	£15,000
2007	DCSF funding secured for VCS Engage	Not known
2008	VCS Engage funding continued to 2011	Not known
2009	BASIS funding year 1 to 2010	£124,692
2010	BASIS funding year 2 to 2011	£118,498
2010	Progress funding (NCVYS/CWDC) Sep 10-Mar 11	£37,750
2011	BASIS funding year 3 to 2012	£115,652
2011	Catalyst skills development funding Oct 11-Dec 12	£1,000
2011	Catalyst training partnerships funding Nov 11-Mar 12	£11,700
2012	Supporting Change funding Mar 12-Oct 12	£9,600

Appendix 2 - Acronyms

AWM – Advantage West Midlands

BASIS – Building and Sustaining Infrastructure Services – funding stream from Big Lottery Fund for third sector infrastructure

CVYS – Council for Voluntary Youth Services

CWDC – Children's Workforce Development Council

DCSF – Department for Children, Schools and Families

GOWM – Government Office for the West Midlands

G:XL – project run by G:Up and funded by BASIS 2009-2012

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

NCVCCO – National Council for Voluntary Child Care Organisations (now Children England)

NCVO – National Council for Voluntary Organisations

NCVYS – National Council for Voluntary Youth Services

OCN – Open College Network

RAWM – Regional Action West Midlands

RSEF – Regional Strategic Engagement Fund

RYO – Regional Youth Organisation (pseudonym)

UKYP – UK Youth Parliament

VCS – Voluntary and Community Sector

WMFF – West Midlands Faith Forum

WMVYSF – West Midlands Voluntary Youth Sector Forum

YIO – Youth Involvement Officer

References

- Alcock, P. (2012) *The Big Society: a new policy environment for the third sector?* TSRC Working Paper 82, Birmingham, Third Sector Research Centre, University of Birmingham.
- Checkoway, B. (2011) 'What is youth participation?' *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33: 340-345.
- Checkoway, B., Allison, T. and Montoya, C. (2005) 'Youth participation in public policy at the municipal level' *Children and Youth Services Review*, 27: 1149-1162.
- Checkoway, B. and Richards-Schuster, K. (2006) 'Youth participation for educational reform in low-income communities of color', in Ginwright, S. (ed) *Beyond Resistance: Youth Activism and Community Change*. New York, Routledge, pp.319-332
- Conservative Party (2008) *A Stronger Society: Voluntary Action in the 21st Century*. Responsibility Agenda, Policy Green paper No.5. London, Conservative Party.
- DfES (2004) *Every Child Matters: Change for Children – Working with voluntary and community organisations to deliver change for children and young people*. Nottingham, DfES Publications.
- Frost, N. and Elichao, F. (2014) 'Feminist postmodernism, poststructuralism, and critical theory', in Hesse-Biber, S. (ed) *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer* Thousand Oaks, California, Sage, pp. 42–72.
- Gill, C., La Valle, I. and Brady, L-M. with Kane, D., Clark, J. and Bass, P. (2011) *The Ripple Effect: The nature and impact of the children and young people's voluntary sector*. London, NCB.
- Harris, M., Cairns, B. and Hutchison, R. (2004) "'So many tiers, so many agendas, so many pots of money": the challenge of English regionalization for voluntary and community organisations' *Social Policy & Administration*, 38(5): 525-540.

Head, B. (2011) 'Why not ask them? Mapping and promoting youth participation' *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33: 541-547.

Home Office (2004) *ChangeUp: capacity building and infrastructure framework for the voluntary and community sector*. London, Home Office Communications Directorate.

Jones, M., Evans, S. and Kimberlee, R. (2010) *South West Well-being Programme: Learning from Consortium Working*. Bristol, Centre for Public Health Research, University of the West of England.

Kara, H. (2006) *GUIWM Final Evaluation Report*, unpublished report.

Kara, H. (2012) *G:XL Narrative Report*, unpublished report.

Keast, R. and Mandell, M. (2014) 'The collaborative push: moving beyond rhetoric and gaining evidence' *Journal of Management and Governance*, 18: 9-28.

Land, R., Rattray, J. and Vivian, P. (2014) 'Learning in the liminal space: a semiotic approach to threshold concepts' *Higher Education*, 67: 199-217.

Macmillan, R. and Ellis Paine, A., with Kara, H., Dayson, C., Sanderson, E. and Wells, P. (2014) *Building capabilities in the voluntary sector: what the evidence tells us*. Briefing Paper 125. Birmingham, Third Sector Research Centre, University of Birmingham.

McCartan, C., Burns, S. and Schubotz, D. (2012) 'Recruitment and capacity-building challenges in participatory research involving young people in Northern Ireland', in Goodson, L. and Phillimore, J. (eds) *Community Research for Participation: From Theory to Method* Bristol, Policy Press, pp. 283-298.

Milbourne, L. (2009) 'Remodelling the third sector: advancing collaboration or competition in community-based initiatives?' *Journal of Social Policy*, 38(2): 277-297.

Milbourne, L. and Cushman, M. (2014) 'Complying, transforming or resisting in the new austerity? Realigning social welfare and independent action among English voluntary organisations' *Journal of Social Policy*, 44(3): 463-485.

National Audit Office (2009a) *Building the Capacity of the Third Sector: Summary*. London, The Stationery Office.

National Audit Office (2009b) *The Impact of ChangeUp on Support and Frontline Organisations*. London, National Audit Office.

Scott, D. and Russell, L. (2005) *Researching voluntary and community action: the potential of qualitative case studies* York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Seibel, W. (1989) 'The function of mellow weakness: nonprofit organizations as problem nonsolvers in Germany', in James, E. (ed) *Nonprofit Sector in International Perspective: Studies in Comparative Culture and Policy* Cary, NC, Oxford University Press, pp. 177-193.

Seibel, W. (1996) 'Successful failure: an alternative view on organizational coping' *American Behavioral Scientist*, 39(8): 1011-1024.

Stafford, J. (2012) 'Recession, resilience, resources... and relationships' *Voluntary Sector Review*, 3(2): 257-263.

Stoecklin, D. (2012) 'Theories of action in the field of child participation: in search of explicit frameworks' *Childhood*, 20(4): 443-457.

Thomassen, B. (2009) 'The uses and meanings of liminality' *International Political Anthropology*, 2(1): 5-27.

TSRC (2009) *Evaluation of ChangeUp 2004 to 2008: Summative Evaluation Report*. Birmingham, Third Sector Research Centre, University of Birmingham.

WMFF (2006) *West Midlands Faiths Forum Bulletin 1: Conference News Sheet*, Spring 2006.

WMFF (2007) *A Faith Group Engagement Strategy*. Birmingham, WMFF.

Wright, L. and Jeffs, T. (1999) *Firm Foundations: a report into the infrastructure provisions for voluntary youth organisations in England* London, NCVYS.

Related TSRC Working Papers

You may find the following related **TSRC Working Papers** of interest:

Paper 118: *A brave new world for voluntary sector infrastructure? Vouchers, markets and demand led capacity building*, Caron Walton and Rob Macmillan (March 2014)

Paper 125: *Building capabilities in the voluntary sector: What the evidence tells us*, by Rob Macmillan and Angela Ellis-Paine, with Helen Kara, Chris Dayson, Elizabeth Sanderson and Peter Wells (September 2014)

Paper 126: *Third sector partnerships and capability building: What the evidence tells us*, by Helen Kara (September 2014)

Paper 127: *Building capabilities in the voluntary sector: A review of the market*, by Chris Dayson and Elizabeth Sanderson (September 2014)

These and others can be accessed and downloaded free of charge at:

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tsrc/publications/index.aspx>

About the Centre

The third sector provides support and services to millions of people. Whether providing front-line services, making policy or campaigning for change, good quality research is vital for organisations to achieve the best possible impact. The **Third Sector Research Centre** exists to develop the evidence base on, for and with the third sector in the UK. Working closely with practitioners, policy-makers and other academics, TSRC is undertaking and reviewing research, and making this research widely available. The Centre works in collaboration with the third sector, ensuring its research reflects the realities of those working within it, and helping to build the sector's capacity to use and conduct research.

Third Sector Research Centre,
School of Social Policy,
Muirhead Tower,
University of Birmingham,
Birmingham, B15 2TT

Tel: 0121 414 8975

Email: r.macmillan@bham.ac.uk

www.tsrc.ac.uk

Contact the author

Dr Helen Kara

Associate Fellow, TSRC

Director, We Research It Ltd.

<http://www.weresearchit.co.uk/>

01889 564739

helen@weresearchit.co.uk



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons [Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

© TSRC 2016