



Committee: Funding Committee of the City Bridge Foundation Board	Date: 4 December 2023
Subject: Propel Programme Update	Public
Report of: Sacha Rose-Smith, Chief Funding Director	For Information
Report Author: Sam Grimmett Batt, Funding Director; Nat Jordan, Head of Propel Programme; Shegufta Slawther, Head of Propel Programme	

Summary

This paper provides an update on the Propel Programme, a ten-year funder collaboration co-ordinated by London Funders to which CBF has allocated £30m. It provides an update on the contribution to the infrastructure and convening costs, awarded by CBF to London Funders over 12 months ago, a digest of key learning activities by the collaboration’s learning partner, and an update on the development of a new programme for continuation for some of the current cohort of Propel grantees. Appendices also include further information on the contributions in Round One across collaborating funders, and a case example of one Propel funded project, now six months into its delivery.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Funding Committee of the City Bridge Foundation Board, in discharge of functions for the City Corporation as Trustee of City Bridge Foundation and solely in the charity’s best interests:

- i) Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. Background and an overview of the Propel programme is included at Appendix 1.

Resourcing Grant to London Funders – One Year On

2. In autumn 2022, City Bridge Foundation (CBF) awarded £695,600 over five years to London Funders in support of its role in convening and providing the infrastructure of the collaboration that would become Propel, then known as Collaborative Action for Recovery (CAR). Propel is a funder collaboration which CBF is a partner in and towards which it has allocated £30m of funding to be awarded as aligned grants (grants processed through our usual functions in house but which applicants apply for using a shared portal so that all the participants can see the applications. Of the £30m, £7.1m has been awarded so far with the remainder due to be allocated over the next five years. The grant to London Funders referenced in this report is separate from the £30m Propel allocation and was resourced through the normal grants budget.
3. A registered charity established in 2005, London Funders (charity no. 1116201) is a membership body engaged with over 170 organisations across charitable, statutory, and private sectors. Members cover London’s 32 boroughs as well as

the City of London, and most provide funding to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations but also (in some instances) directly to Londoners. It has three core objectives:

- a. providing space for learning and collaboration;
- b. being a voice for funders in policy debates; and
- c. promoting effective funding models.

4. The resourcing grant was awarded against a recent background of London Funders' successful and award-winning stewardship and coordination of the London Community Response (LCR), which brought together 67 funders and four equity partners to deliver 3,400 grants with a value of over £57.7m to community organisations in an emergency and, later, recovery response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021.
5. In this context, and given London Funders' pivotal neutral role representing and amplifying London's funders, it was agreed that London Funders were particularly well-positioned to continue to carry the mantle to convene an ambitious new programme which shifted its focus away from the emergency context and looked towards longer term solutions. This quickly evolved into the Propel programme, the aim of which is to deliver a £100m fund over ten years to support equity led civil society organisations to drive systemic change and tackle structural inequalities in London, all the while assimilating learning and influencing wider funding practice. Please see Appendix 1 for further details on the Propel Programme background and criteria as it has been delivered against so far.
6. So far, a total of £340,000 of the funds committed by CBF have been spent as follows:

Table 1: CBF contributions to Propel infrastructure funding by Financial Year

London Funders FY	Amount per FY (£)	Spent as at September 2023 (£)
Apr - Mar 22/23	255,000	255,000
Apr - Mar 23/24	126,000	85,000
Apr - Mar 24/25	84,000	N/a
Apr - Mar 25/26	84,000	N/a
Apr - Mar 26/27	88,000	N/a
Apr – Mar 27/28	58,600	N/a
Total	695,600	340,000

7. The above differs slightly from the annual payment schedule for draw down of funds relating to the grant, for which a grant year is October to September, as London Funders plans and tracks expenditure by the financial year (April to March). This has contributed to staffing costs for:
 - a. the Propel Programme Manager and Director of Collaboration;
 - b. IT and website costs;
 - c. the build, testing support and hosting costs for the online portal, the 'single front door' through which civil society organisations can make applications; and

- d. events costs including bringing cohorts of grantees, funders, equity and learning partners together for learning activities.
8. We originally reported the expectation that we would be contributing proportionately to the £1.8m running costs over five years, broadly proportionate with the expected funding commitment to onward grantmaking in the total collaboration. This has been more heavily weighted in the first (60%) and second (expected to be 38%) years as the collaboration establishes itself, which is appropriate for CBF's role as one founding funder. The GLA, John Lyons Charity, Bloomberg and National Lottery Community Fund have also committed funding to the core costs. Overall, of committed funds, our contribution is equal to 38.5%; however, as some contributions are over three years (whereas CBF's is over five) it is expected that as further funding is committed as grants are extended, or other funders come on board, this will reduce to 32% overall. This is proportionate with the scale of contribution to grant making from CBF. Please note, this refers to contributions specifically for the costs to London Funders to resource the collaboration. For a breakdown of onward grantmaking by each funder in Round One of the collaboration, please see Appendix 2.
9. London Funders' first annual report to us on the impact of this grant covers both the infrastructure that has been developed to convene the activities, and the programme delivery that this has enabled. Learning from the collaboration as a whole is the purview of the collaboration's learning partner, the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR), and is covered separately in this report.

Infrastructure

Table 2: Propel Partnership Structure

Funders	Equity Partners
<u>Making Propel grants (pooled and aligned)</u> Bloomberg City Bridge Foundation Greater London Authority John Laing Trust London Legal Support Trust (<i>leading a pooled fund with City Bridge Foundation, National Lottery Community Fund, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Trust for London</i>). National Lottery Community Fund Lloyds Bank Foundation Mercers'	HEAR London Inclusion London LGBT+ Consortium The Ubele Initiative Women's Resource Centre
<u>Contributing to the infrastructure costs of Propel</u> City Bridge Foundation Greater London Authority John Lyon's Charity National Lottery Community Fund	Other Partners IVAR - Learning Partner Outlandish – Tech Partner
London Funders	

The Propel collaboration is supported by London Funders, who convene partners, provide tools and processes, and share the learning from Propel back with the wider funding sector.

10. The governance of Propel is delivered through three groups – Strategy, Operations and Communications – each of which is attended by participating funders and equity partners, with potential collaborating funders able to attend as observers. A memorandum of understanding between partners, agreed by the strategy group, sets out the decision making of each group and provides an overview of the activities and responsibilities of all partners.
11. From early discussions of Propel, consideration has been given to a proposed ‘vehicle’ to hold pooled funds on behalf of funder collaborations, to enable more collaborative and equitable decision making. (Currently, all funding is ‘aligned’, that is awarded through the processes of individual collaborating funders, except for the Robust Safety Net pooled fund held by LLST.) A Vehicle Working Group, comprising members of the Strategy Group (including senior officers from CBF, the GLA and NLCF) has been developing the thinking on governance, staffing and resourcing. The London Funders Board of Trustees has now agreed to set up a subsidiary company, and a Nominations Committee (to include CBF) who will recommend the appointment of the first Directors. The ‘vehicle’ may hold pooled funds for the next round of Propel funding, and will also offer this service to other collaborations.
12. A bespoke online portal has been created as the tech infrastructure is being continually maintained and developed to support funder collaboration and a smooth process for applicant organisations.

Programme Delivery

13. As the Committee will know, Round One launched in October 2022 to significant demand from the sector, with two types of grants available (please see Appendices 1 and 2 for details on the criteria and distribution of funding by the collaborating funders).
14. Perhaps the greatest success of Propel thus far, is that 87% of the grants made in Round One went to organisations led by and for Propel’s four priority communities (communities experiencing racial inequity, Deaf and Disabled people, LGBT+ people, and women and girls). This included 100% of Explore grants and 82% of Deliver and Develop grants. Many funders reported funding organisations that were entirely new to them. Further equity data is included at Appendix 2. The involvement of equity partners in the design, delivery and outreach to communities is creditable for significant impact in this regard. Opportunities to maintain and develop the involvement of equity partners, including greater involvement in assessment and decision making, remain under constant consideration.

Table 3: Applications to Round One

	Applications submitted	Eligible applications	Assessed applications	Funded applications
Whole programme	601	576	195	90
Explore	199	187	36	28
Deliver and Develop	402	389	159	62

Note that eligible applications refer to the eligibility after basic checks, e.g. relating to organisation type, and not for example the eligibility of proposed work against programme criteria which were subsequently considered to identify applications for assessment.

15. As previously reported to the Committee, the demand on the programme and limited available funding resulted in a large proportion of applications being unsuccessful. This speaks to the scale of interest in the programme, and the breadth of the criteria in the first iteration. Efforts to refine criteria, eligible organisation type, and a multiple stage application type to manage expectations have informed all activities in the follow up to Round One including the 'Round 1B' (see paragraph 17 below) and the developing pathways for progression for continuation (see paragraph 27 below).
16. Most organisations funded across the collaboration received less funding than that requested, and for many funders this was due to the budget available to them, and the Strategy Group is currently considering ways to ensure that this has not compromised the ability of organisations to participate in learning activities. No CBF funded grants, where recommended a reduced amount, removed contributions to learning activities and reductions related to other assessment related questions, such as ineligible items. The Robust Safety Net fund to which CBF separately contributes also engages its own learning partner. For more information on this, please see agenda item 11.
17. In June 2023, further funding was announced, known as 'Round 1B', focussed on the New Deal for Young People mission, which aims to increase the quantity of quality mentoring for disadvantaged young people aged 10-24. The GLA is the sole funder under this programme, and seeks to make 25-30 two-year Deliver and Develop grants. At the time of writing, 89 shortlisted applications are under assessment. This programme has trialled a two-stage approach to manage demand. A reassessed approach to grantee and applicant-facing events also ensures that equity partners, young assessors and funded organisations play a more prominent role. The aforementioned MOU has since clarified processes for agreeing when funding opportunities become a collaborative Propel programme, in recognition that the single-funder involvement has limited the scope for learning on collaborative approaches through this round.
18. The Operations Group has also finalised an approach to shared reporting, which includes a shared reporting form. This will now be communicated to funded organisations for reporting after the end of the first full grant year.

19. Most recently, the Operations Group has finalised progression options for organisations with a one-year Explore grant. These will be known as 'Expand' grants, progress against which is explained further in this report (please see paragraph 27).
20. Throughout, we aim to work in alignment with Propel's principles, particularly around sharing power, funded organisations have had regular space to inform and feedback, as well as to codesign processes. Funded organisations are keen to develop closer relationships with Grant Managers, network with peers and share the burden through cowriting reporting and hosting more visits from funders, and involving beneficiaries more directly through application processes and reporting. The shared approach to reporting and new Expand application process have been designed to hold this relational and codesign approach closely at their core, and have been met with overwhelmingly positive responses.
21. As well as the learning activities provided by IVAR (described in more detail below, please see paragraph 22), a Slack channel for grantees has been established to share peer learning and networking, and London Funders disseminate a bimonthly newsletter to share updates and learning.

IVAR Learning Activities

22. Over the first year, IVAR has produced a total of three learning outputs from interviews with participating funders, interviews with funded organisations, and a summary of the first Learning Network Day which was attended by grantees and funders. IVAR has also presented to and facilitated discussion at two All Partner Away Days, and facilitated ad hoc events, for example reflection sessions for Operations Group and Communications Group.
23. The learning engagement with funders and equity partners identified that to collaborate at scale, stakeholders require discursive spaces to learn, challenge, disrupt and experiment, with a commitment to sharing and doing; not too abstracted and not too open. A peer-to-peer, non-hierarchical approach, along with tangible and accessible recommendations strengthen collaboration at scale. IVAR reported that the experiences of funders and equity partners to date include: a high level of collaborations and commitment (and has felt similar to the LCR); a thorough approach to ensure 'no stones left unturned' in conversations around funding with time dedicated to teasing out the nuances in equity discussions; and, strong leadership from London Funders with an acknowledgment of the balance between diplomacy, collaboration and needing to make hard decisions. However, there has also been some ambiguity around the governance of Propel, and at times, capacity has been stretched. Initial findings highlight that these challenges need to be addressed to ensure that the overarching ambition of systems change can be achieved. In response to the ambiguity around the governance of the programme, the Strategy group has since approved a Memorandum of Understanding, referred to earlier in this paper.
24. IVAR's engagement with funded organisations found that to achieve the ambitions of Propel, two key areas were identified. The first was the importance of achieving

‘equitable collaboration’ by recognising that multiple actors rather than individual organisations generate desired outcomes and committing to a culture of equity between funder and funded organisations underpinned by trust-based grant-making practices. The second was demonstrating a ‘high tolerance of risk and uncertainty’ which demands patience and persistence, and recognising that achieving impact is not wholly controllable, so ‘soft’ measures of success are valid signs of progress.

25. The first Learning Network Day was held in June of this year, bringing together organisations funded by Propel, alongside funders and equity partners. Discussions highlighted that to enable change, a different approach to funding is required. Whilst the Propel principles (Systemic, Bold, Flexible, Sharing Power, Equitable, Non-Partisan, Long-Term and Accountable) provide a vision of change and collective energy for change, funded organisations seek funders to initiate open dialogue about the 10-year vision and long-term grants. Having that stability over a long period will only strengthen organisations to help achieve the ambitions of the programme. Another area identified is the value to light-touch, co-designed, relational reporting, and the opportunities for funded organisations to connect and collaborate independently. In direct response to these last two issues, London Funders have setup a ‘Slack’ platform (as mentioned earlier in the report) specifically for funded organisations to connect and collaborate, and we have agreed a process for monitoring whereby organisations can select their preferred method of reporting, including the option of the Grants Manager of each grant capturing monitoring and learning from learning visits, with the organisation having final sign-off, encouraging a more relational approach.
26. As learning is captured by IVAR, specific issues are discussed by the Operations Group to consider what changes can be made and implemented to reflect these points. Within the first year of Propel establishing the capturing of learning across the piece has been a critical process to ensuring the programme is values-led and has the best chance of achieving the ambitions of Propel.

Progress on ‘Expand’ Funding

27. In our September report to CBF Funding Committee, Members were advised that officers and other collaborating funders were developing a series of ‘in between’ top up grants to organisations awarded an initial one-year of exploratory funding (known as Explore grants) to allow applications for continuation funding for those projects where it is appropriate. In 2023/24 it is expected CBF will make up to 16, and next financial year up to seven.
28. This progression pathway has developed well in consultation with the current cohort of Explore grantees and designed by the Operations Group. This interim funding is to be known as Expand funding. These will be two-year grants enabling organisations to continue to explore, or to start designing and testing approaches to change. Building on the learning captured to date by IVAR, the process for this will be light touch and bespoke for each funded organisation, starting with a six-month check in with the Grant Manager, and ideally providing a grant decision before the end of the current grant. This process was developed closely with the cohort of Explore funded organisations, who have responded well to the flexible,

hands-on and relational style of co-developing their proposals alongside funders. The first recommendations are expected to be made early in 2024.

29. A case example of a recent six-month visit and emerging ideas for continuation for Headway East London, who have received one year's exploratory funding towards improving health and social care pathways for people living with traumatic brain injury is included at Appendix 3.

Conclusion

30. Propel continues to successfully deliver a collaborative and innovative approach to funding long term systems change in London's Civil Society. Programme development is progressing well, with partners continuing to engage through the stewardship of London Funders.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Propel Background
- Appendix 2 – Round One Funding Across All Funders
- Appendix 3 – Headway East London Explore Grant six-month update

Nat Jordan

Head of Propel Programme

E: nat.jordan@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Shegufta Slawther

Head of Propel Programme

E: Shegufta.slawther@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Appendix 1 – Propel Background

Propel is focused on putting money and power in the hands of communities who are best placed to make change happen.

Propel is and has always been about collaboration – recognising that the challenges we face are too big for any funder, charity or community to tackle alone. Our shared ambition is to build long-term collaborations that draw on the strengths and assets of us all so that, together, we can tackle the issues facing London.

Over the next ten years, Propel will provide flexibility and capacity to organisations led by and for groups experiencing structural inequality so that they can explore, develop and lead collaborative ways of tackling some of London’s biggest challenges. This includes providing support for young people, women and girls, LGBT+ communities, Deaf and Disabled people, and communities experiencing racial inequity.

Propel is powered by London Funders and are being supported by a growing list of funders, including Bloomberg, City Bridge Foundation – the City of London Corporation’s charity funder – The National Lottery Community Fund, the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and advice funders co-ordinated by London Legal Support Trust.

The principles uniting Propel funders

These principles were co-designed with Propel partners, which emerged as the most challenging for funders to build processes and programmes around, and therefore the greatest opportunities to test ourselves.

- **Systemic** – engaging with the whole system around an issue, tackling root causes not just symptoms, building a shared understanding of how systems can change
- **Bold** – experimenting and taking risks together, influencing wider ways of working
- **Flexible** – recognising that the future is uncertain, that funders and grantees are on a learning journey together, trusting grantees to respond to changing challenges and opportunities
- **Sharing power** – recognising that everyone has something to contribute (money, knowledge, networks and reach), investing in people’s capacity to co-design, embedding participation in decision-making from the start, building trust and confidence
- **Equitable** – unlearning old ways of working, biases, and lenses on the world, ensuring that design, process and decision-making are inclusive and take account of the diversity of the sector and of communities
- **Non-partisan** – recognising both civic and democratic leadership, combining the convening power of politicians with wider participation and voice
- **Long-term** – investing beyond political and institutional cycles, providing stability for civil society partners and seeking to make transformational change
- **Accountable** – jointly accountable to each other and to the communities we serve

Funding partners



MAYOR OF LONDON



Appendix 2 – Propel Round One Spend

A full list of grants made by CBF in Round One was provided with the update to Funding Committee in September and is therefore not replicated here.

Round One Equity Data

Priority community	No. of grants	% of grants	Comparison with London's communities
Communities experiencing racial inequity	49	55%	63.2%
Deaf and Disabled People	19	21%	15.7%
LGBT+ People	16	18%	6.3%
Women and girls	35	39%	51.6%
None of the above	12	13%	

Note that the above relates to self-reported data at the application stage by applicant organisations, the validity of which has not been verified in all cases, and that sifters and assessors identified in many cases was not accurate relative to the Propel definition of 'user led', that is where a minimum of 75% of the board and 50% of senior staff are from the communities that they benefit. Nonetheless, this still provides useful indicative data on the reach of the funding.

Previously reported data on CBF's grants to user led organisations has been verified at assessment and is therefore considered more accurate.

By Funder and Mission

Propel Round One Overall

£26,247,623 in total was committed by eight funders across 90 grant holders.

GLA committed the most funding (£9.7m) with CBF making the largest number of individual grants (33).

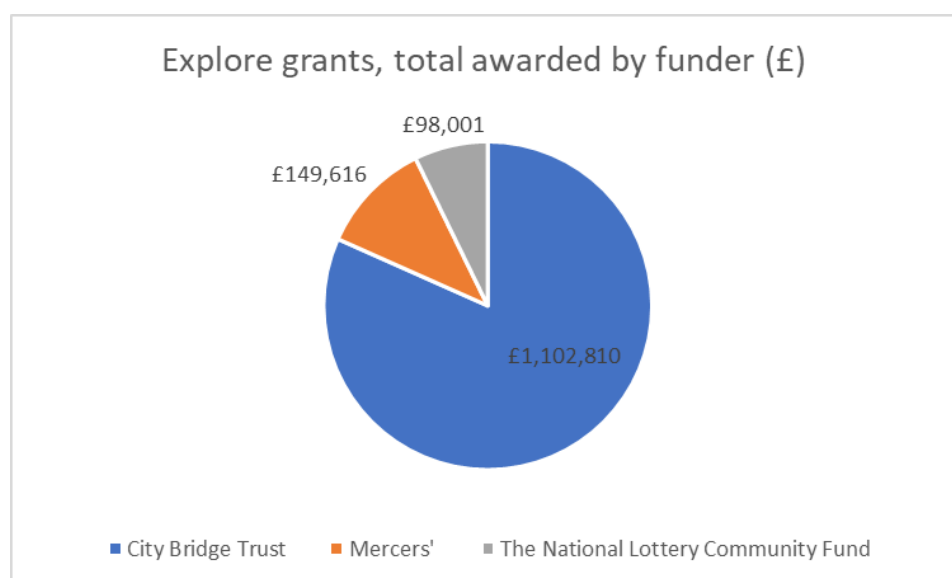
Funder	Sum of Amount awarded (£)	# grants
Greater London Authority	£9,711,084	26
City Bridge Foundation	£7,040,810	33
London Legal Support Trust	£3,793,201	8
The National Lottery Community Fund	£3,120,276	8
Mercers'	£949,386	7
Bloomberg	£735,000	4
John Laing Charitable Trust & Greater London Authority	£522,866	1
Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales	£375,000	5
TOTAL	£26,247,623	92

Explore Summary Data

CBF made the majority of Explore grants and is the only funder to have funded Explore grants in all three mission areas. The majority were made under the Building Strong Communities mission.

All Explore Grants

Funder	Sum of Amount awarded (£)	# grants
City Bridge Foundation	£1,102,810	23
Mercers'	£149,616	3
The National Lottery Community Fund	£98,001	2
Grand Total	£1,350,427	28



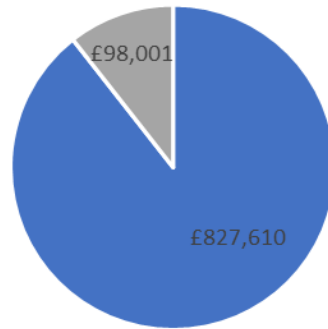
By Mission

The total grants by mission may add up to more than total number of grants awarded, as some had more than one mission category. Further, these totals reflect the self-selected missions by organisations, and may differ from previous analysis of CBF-only grants where the mission the recommendation was made under was applied.

1. Building Strong Communities (BSC)

Funder	Sum of Amount awarded (£)	# grants
City Bridge Foundation	£827,610	17
Mercers'	£0	0
The National Lottery Community Fund	£98,001	2
Grand Total	£925,611	19

Explore BSC grants, total awarded by funder (£)

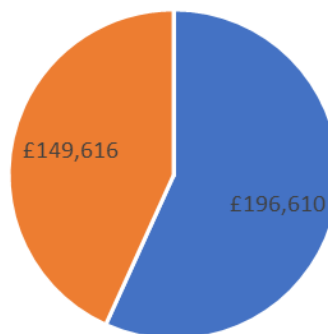


■ City Bridge Trust ■ Mercers' ■ The National Lottery Community Fund

2. *New Deal for Young People (NDYP)*

Funder	Sum of Amount awarded (£)	# grants
City Bridge Foundation	£196,610	4
Mercers'	£149,616	3
The National Lottery Community Fund	£0	0
Grand Total	£346,226	7

Explore NDYP grants, total awarded by funder (£)



■ City Bridge Trust ■ Mercers' ■ The National Lottery Community Fund

3. *Robust Safety Net (RSN)*

CBF was the sole funder of Explore grants under this mission.

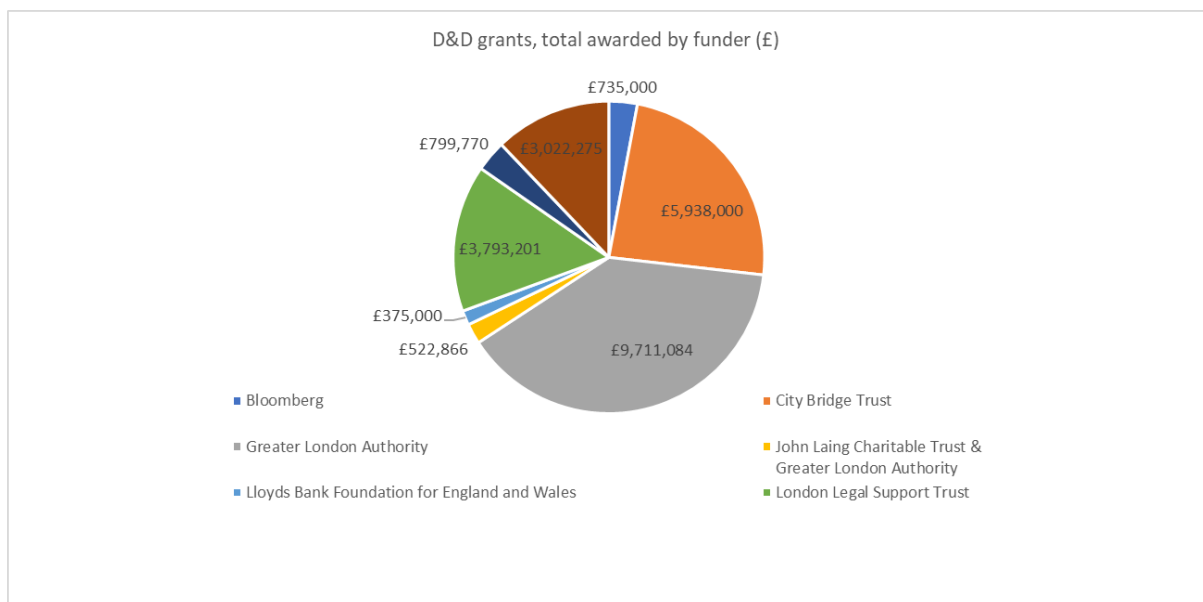
Funder	Sum of Amount awarded (£)	# grants
City Bridge Foundation	£178,500	4
Grand Total	£178,500	4

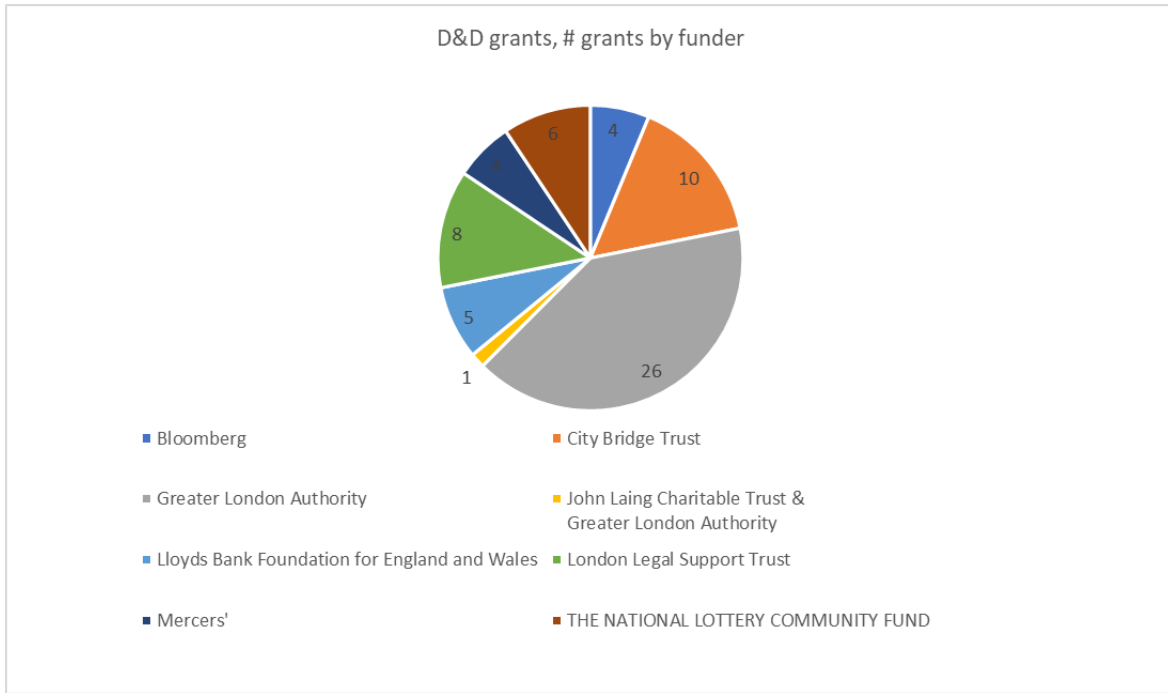
Deliver and Develop (D&D) Summary Data

All D&D Grants

The total number of grants will add up to more than 100% due to co-funding, (e.g., two grants co-funded by CBF and LLST will be counted by each time funded, so appear twice).

Funder	Sum of Amount awarded (£)	# grants
Bloomberg	£735,000	4
City Bridge Foundation	£5,938,000	10
Greater London Authority	£9,711,084	26
John Laing Charitable Trust & Greater London Authority	£522,866	1
Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales	£375,000	5
London Legal Support Trust	£3,793,201	8
Mercers'	£799,770	4
THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND	£3,022,275	6
Total	£24,897,196	64

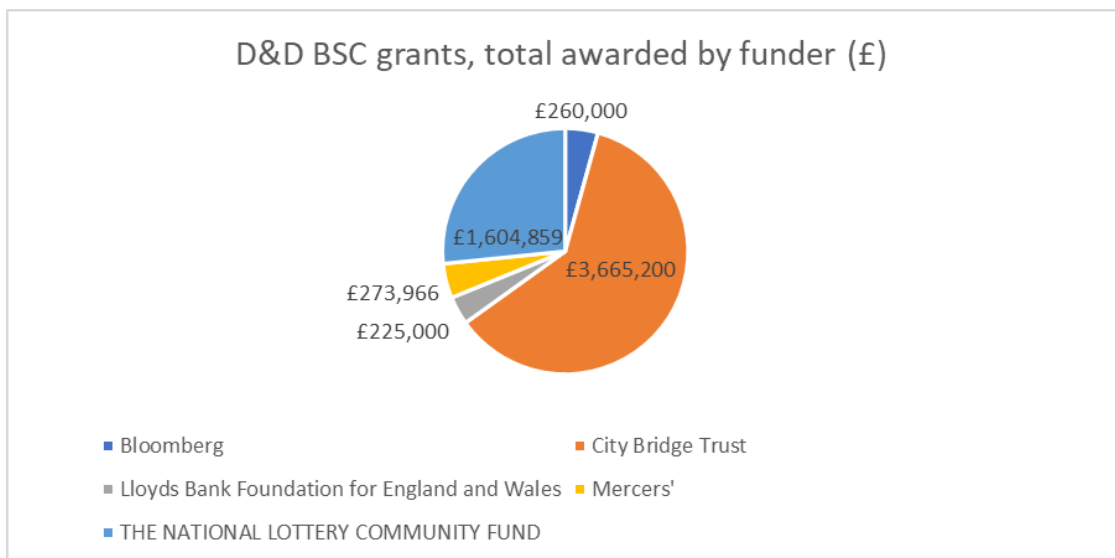




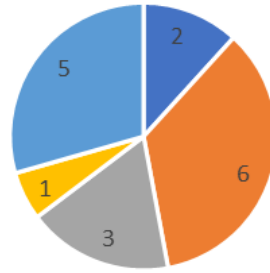
By Mission

1. BSC

Funder	Sum of Amount awarded (£)	# grants
Bloomberg	£260,000	2
City Bridge Foundation	£3,665,200	6
Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales	£225,000	3
Mercers'	£273,966	1
THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND	£1,604,859	5
Total	£6,029,025	17



D&D BSC grants, # grants by funder



- Bloomberg
- City Bridge Trust
- Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales
- Mercers'
- THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND

2. NDYP

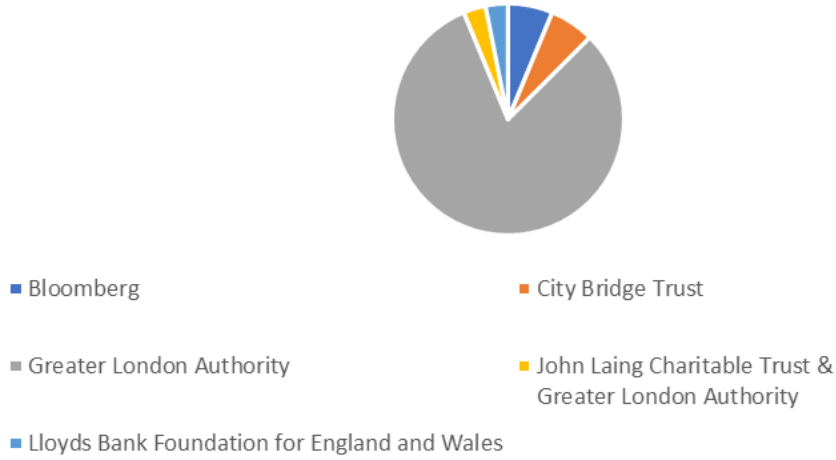
Funder	Sum of Amount awarded (£)	# grants
Bloomberg	£475,000	2
City Bridge Foundation	£1,921,800	2
Greater London Authority	£9,711,084	26
John Laing Charitable Trust & Greater London Authority	£522,866	1
Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales	£75,000	1
Total	£12,705,750	32

D&D NDYP grants, total awarded by funder (£)



- Bloomberg
- City Bridge Trust
- Greater London Authority
- John Laing Charitable Trust & Greater London Authority
- Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales

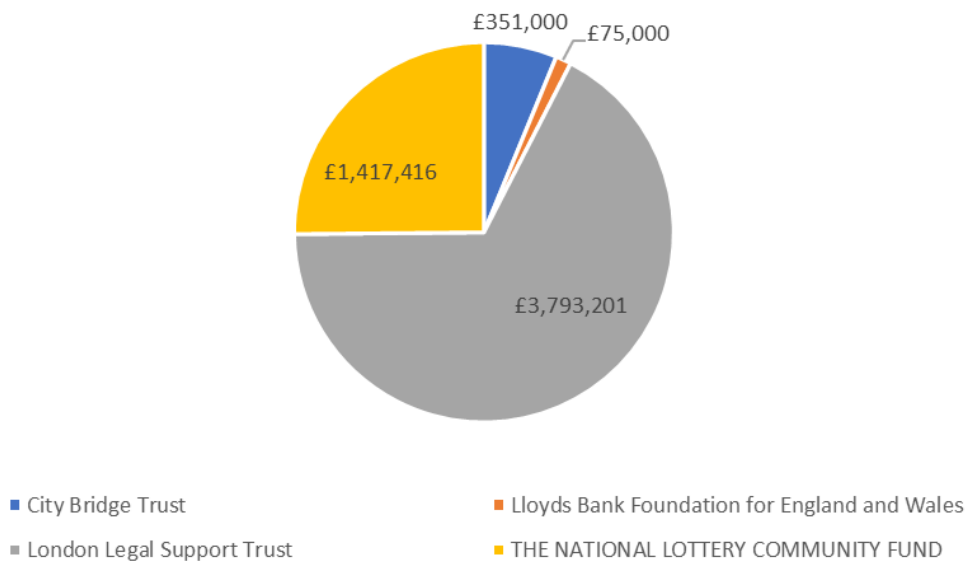
D&D NDYP grants, # grants by funder



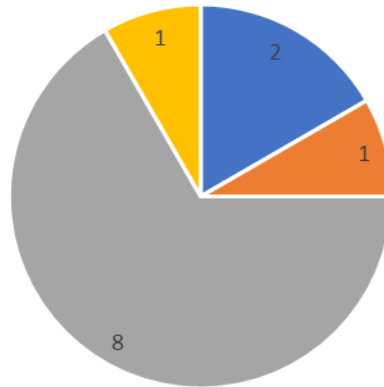
3. RSN

Funder	Sum of Amount awarded (£)	# grants
City Bridge Foundation	£351,000	2
Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales	£75,000	1
London Legal Support Trust	£3,793,201	8
THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND	£1,417,416	1
Total	£5,636,617	12

D&D RSN grants, total awarded by funder (£)



D&D RSN grants, # grants by funder



■ City Bridge Trust

■ London Legal Support Trust

■ Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales

■ THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND

Appendix 3 – Headway East London Explore Grant, six months in

Ref. 20016	Headway East London	Grant amount: £49,100
Purpose of Explore grant: to explore ways to bring the voice of brain injury survivors to increase awareness and inform best practice within health and social welfare		
Six-month visit was held on Wednesday 1 st November 2023 at Headway's premises in Haggerston		

The Organisation

Headway East London (HEL), founded in December 2000, is a registered charity (no. 1083910) that works with over 700 survivors of brain injury each year, and their family, friends and carers. HEL offers a range of specialist support and services across 13 boroughs in London, including advocacy, therapy, family support, community and day services. All its services are member-led.

Achievements

So far HEL have conducted an audit of mental health services in their catchment area (Barking & Dagenham, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Havering, Newham, Redbridge, the City of London, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Westminster, Islington).

From June to now, this has involved information gathering through speaking to relevant services, including Talking Therapies (formerly IAPT), Mind, and other free-to-access services. At the time of the visit, HEL was about to conduct a series of focus groups, in person, with members, including specifically targeting casework members, and others with carers and support workers. Recognising that focus group formats aren't appropriate for everyone, a survey has been developed to be delivered alongside, that where necessary a support worker can assist with completing. These are intended to ascertain people's experience of accessing services, and what the barriers they face are, including both systemic and individualised issues.

A successful conference was held on 19 October, called 'Not Just a Conference #embracethechaos', codesigned with HEL's members, which involved conversations with experts by experience, clinical professionals, interactive workshops and a premier of a film, documenting the journey of one of a member after a traumatic brain injury.

Finding so far are confirming and building evidence of the gap in provision for people with brain injuries. Pathways that exist for general mental health, or other conditions (such as strokes) exist, but there are no specific mental health support pathways. Within existing policy recommendations for brain injury rehab, general guidance recommends individualised support for people with brain injuries, however this is an opinion given with neither evidence nor an indication of who should be providing this service. There are no KPIs for longer term care for people with brain injuries, which results in a lack of motivation for services to undertake complex cases for support. HEL have identified some pockets of hyperlocal better practice, but these are highly localised and not replicated across HEL's catchment area.

Challenges Faced

Making contact with relevant professionals and trying to speak to people (such as neuropsychologists and therapists) is a challenge as the number of emails and phone calls required to make even initial contact is time consuming. On the other hand, where HEL is able to make contact, it finds that professionals are keen to see development in this area and are willing to share insights. The layers of management within institutions are very complex, particularly as brain injury occupies a space in both physical and mental health realms - mental and physical health services are both structured and funded very differently. This can result in different geographical lines for different services, and identifying the right managers within different services is challenging. The work has also become bigger than originally anticipated and has required contributions from more HEL staff, including casework and therapy team workers, at additional cost to the organisation. This will need to be factored into any further funding.

Next Six Months

It is expected that the data gathering portion of the project will conclude by the end of December, with assimilation of the data taking place between January to March. What emerges will recognise that there is a complex and continuous gaps that starts in hospitals (though early support can be stronger), with gaps in community input, rehab, and recognition. The ultimate goal of this work is to influence and inform any possible updates to the relevant policies and pathways. For instance, a significant achievement would be the NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) guidance being updated to recognise brain injury as a long-term condition, and this to result in pathways with clear responsibility for a long-term plan for mental health.