

Set up in 2011 Big Society Funding Community Interest Company is aimed at building the capacity of small and medium sized Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise organisations. Headed up by two skilled and experienced animators: Mark Ereira-Guyer and James Baddeley. The team was boosted last year by Ingrid Gardener who has a wide range of sector experience having worked for NCVO and a host of other charities.

Our small team wants to help community activists become an effective 'Fiery Spirit' in their local communities with our mission to equip them with entrepreneurial and sustainable business skills, to initially 'survive' and then 'thrive' in their creative responses to the Government's 'Big Society' policy agenda.

We do this whilst pursuing a wide range of other consultancy assignments, which amongst other outcomes have successfully fundraised across the country **raising almost £20 million** from the Big Lottery Fund, Local Government contracts and Charitable Trusts, such as Comic Relief and Children in Need.

UK Registered Company No: 07815137



Our key services include:

# CARRYING OUT STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION TO BETTER UNDERSTAND NEEDS

CARRYING OUT EVALUATIONS TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF CURRENT WORK AND PROMOTING THIS IN COMPELLING IMPACT REPORTS

CREATING COMPELLING MARKETING MATERIALS

DEVELOPING NEW INCOME GENERATION STRATEGIES FOR CONTRACTS & GRANTS

DEVELOPING AND WRITING FUNDING AND TENDER APPLICATIONS, INCLUDING CREATING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS AND FRESH WAYS OF WORKING



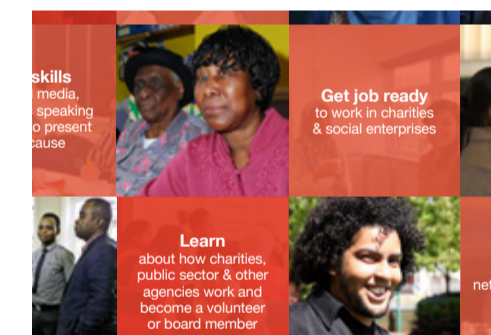
# Review – Big Society Funding Community Interest Company

## Building Better Opportunities & Optimism

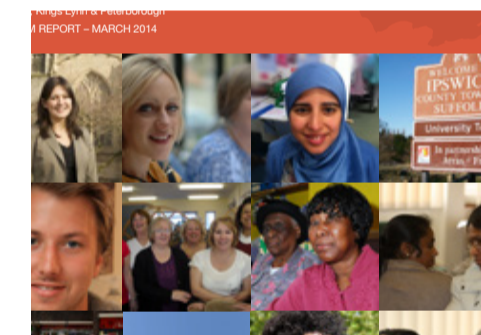
### 4 Years On (2011 - 2015)



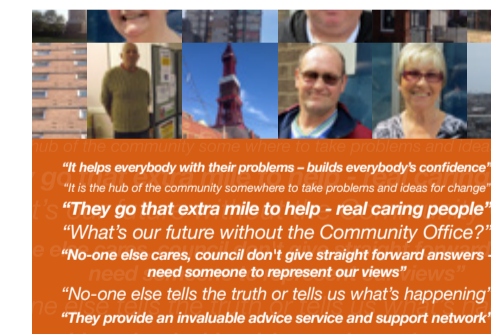
Big Society Funding CIC in action in Peterborough - The School of Fiery Spirits



PARCA - Promoting African Refugees Community Association Peterborough



Creating Inclusive 'Big Society' Communities



Queens Park Residents Association Blackpool



Ipswich & Suffolk Council for Racial Equality

This review looks at our work activities in:

- Empowering people to truly build a 'Big Society'
- Helping grow VCSE organisations
- Securing thousands of pounds of funding
- Leading the way for *Inclusive Communities*
- Guiding & supporting fragile groups to thrive and survive

See inside for:

- How we helped save a women's centre
- Expert advice on reaching diverse communities
- Working with residents to tackle discrimination
- Fostering 'Fiery Spirits' to champion their cause
- Lottery and European funding opportunities



**Big Society Funding is a four-year old Community Interest Company set up to support the VCSE sector to build its capacity and encourage people and members of community groups to become 'Big Society' activists and fundraisers - finding a voice in shaping local services and increasing their ability to meet the needs of the disadvantaged communities they care about. We are an independent and non-political, not-for-profit organisation.**



Mark Ereira-Guyer  
James Baddeley

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## European funding: 'Building Better Opportunities'

In November 2014 along with 35 other organisations across England, Big Society Funding was awarded Lottery development funding (Building Better Opportunities) to promote EU funding programmes.

This involves working across the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough (GCGP) LEP area to guarantee the best possible awareness of EU funding opportunities within the VCSE sector, and collaborating with partners: Peterborough CVS, Cambridge CVS, Social Enterprise East, Community Action Suffolk and West Norfolk CVA.

From 2015 onwards a total funding pot of £9.9m is available to support work to promote social and financial inclusion, and tackle the barriers to work for disadvantaged people. Big Society Funding CIC is responsible for raising awareness, helping to form bidding partnerships and giving initial guidance to potential applicants. Events and workshops to facilitate the development of projects, exchange ideas and create partnerships have been held, or are planned.

Thanks to this EU funding (matched by the Big Lottery Fund), crucial initiatives will be supported over coming years. Here are just some of the actions we can all look forward to making happen:

- Support for adults with learning disabilities
- Language training and employability skills
- Local activities to promote social inclusion
- Financial capability programmes to reduce the number of people in debt
- Improving community cohesion, support for new migrant communities and working together.

### 2015 NEWSFLASH: VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDY

**Big Society commissioned for important study on 'State of the Voluntary Sector' in Norfolk and Suffolk.**

Big Society Funding CIC have been commissioned by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership to carry out a pioneering study to shape investment in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) in the years to come.

The results will be compiled into a public report called the State of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector in Norfolk and Suffolk.

This data will be fed back to New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, and used to inform their strategic objectives, explore funding opportunities and support more long-term investment in the sector. We will report on this in our next review.



With over 20 years of civil society sector experience here in the UK and Canada **Ingrid Gardiner** is now working with the team. She worked as a fundraiser for War Child Canada. Also, having managed the European Funding Network in the International and Partnerships team at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, Ingrid is now taking a lead with the 'Building Better Opportunities' programme. Ingrid studied Gender, Society and Culture at the University of London. She now volunteers for her local community football club assisting with the Respect campaign.

## Some numbers and Highlights

**£1.9m** raised including **£204,000** from the Big Lottery Fund which saved Harrow Women's Centre from closure

Almost **£500,000** to develop and extend community development work in Blackpool, and an evaluation designed to help further income generation activities

**195** days of pro bono – FREE - consultancy (c.50 days/annum) to struggling VCSE organisations at a market value of **£82,275**. This helped VSCE groups generate income to survive and provided them with sustainable skills they will need to hopefully thrive

Between 2012 -2013, as part of our pilot building capacity project supporting four charities in Cambridge and Suffolk we generated **£ 314, 799** of new income, especially significant for a Race Equality Council

We raised **£90,000** from local funders to rejuvenate a decaying Victorian School in a small village - Stretham - in East Cambridgeshire

We helped devise Cambridgeshire ACRE's fundraising strategy and worked with them to secure **£1 million** from the Heritage Lottery Fund

We organised **five** meetings and events involving Government and Shadow ministers

We advised and set up **9** new Community Interest Companies

We co-produced a **£1m** LEP Prize Challenge

We trained **18** people to become Big Society community activists – 'Fiery Spirits'



Text researched and authored by writer **Giulia Damiani**

www.giuliamiani.eu



## Our work 2011-2015

- Four years supporting marginalised communities and individuals
- Encouraging disadvantaged people to participate more in civil society

*“Big Society Funding were crucial in the setting up of Peterborough’s first VCSE partnership for service delivery. Their expertise in bringing groups together, and energy and commitment to the Voluntary and Social Enterprise sector, ensured that agencies from across the City signed up and agreed commitment to the Partnership.”*

**Leonie McCarthy**, Chief Executive, Peterborough CVS

*“Big Society Funding’s work is absolutely flawless.”*

**Ruth Hiscock**, Harrow Women’s Centre Manager

## Why Big Society Funding does this work

*“2014 has been an extremely challenging year for charities. Money is not in plentiful supply and it is increasingly competitive to get it. Yet I strongly believe that if it is really clear what a charity does, the social needs it is meeting and how it makes a positive difference for disadvantaged people, it should be able to find funding. What we do is help charities to articulate this clearly to funders and other stakeholders and also help them to improve the way they operate.”*

**James Baddeley**, Big Society Funding CIC Director

Austerity cuts continue to financially crush and unsettle the entire VCSE sector. While the Government has withdrawn its resources, charities and community groups are overlooked and thus there is a stronger than ever need for external support to help them demonstrate their success and carry out a host of other actions. As revealed by the CIC’s recent ‘State of the Sector’ survey, 68% of VCSE organisations interviewed needed to raise between £10-100k to maintain their services.

Facing extreme financial challenges, many VCSE organisations are unable to carry out external evaluations and need guidance and resources to improve their marketing strategies and communication through social media. According to the ‘State of the Sector’ survey, 53% of respondents need urgent help and support to raise funds. This is where Big Society Funding’s work and expertise comes in.

In further research the CIC revealed the on-going low levels of diverse representation on many public bodies serving local communities (and VCSE boards) in the East of England, an issue that makes it difficult for minorities’ demands to be promoted; for this reason, the directors strongly believe in the importance of boosting small local organisations capacity – and individuals – so that they can stand up against discrimination and get services tailored to meet to their community’s needs.

The CIC aims to make a vibrant civil society truly real: to do this work requires the building of an environment animated by inclusive communities and ‘Fiery Spirits’, where people have the confidence and capability to change things, making them better and are involved in the communities they care about.

*“I cannot recommend James and Mark highly enough. They are two of the most professional, knowledgeable and hard working individuals that I have had the pleasure of working with in my long career in Local Government.”*

**Carol Yarde**, Head of Transformation, Harrow Council



## Introduction

Big Society Funding CIC was set up in 2011 by two leading voluntary sector activists with successful and long experience in a diverse range of charities and social businesses: **Mark Ereira-Guyer** and **James Baddeley**. Since 2014, Ingrid Gardiner’s expertise and knowledge of the civil society sector and European funding has been further perfecting its work and approach.

It is an independent and non-political social enterprise that serves the needs of the most fragile sections of the VCSE sector and wider society. Thanks to ‘Building Better Opportunities’, a recent programme development funding stream from the Big Lottery Fund designed to ensure awareness of EU funding, it has been able to extend its work activities and outreach even further.

Big Society Funding CIC helps vulnerable VCSE organisations, formative groups and smaller to medium-sized charities to continue their precious and vital work in several parts of the country: East of England, London, East Midlands and recently in the North-West.

The support work aims to be effective and inclusive. Working towards equipping voluntary and community sector organisations – and individuals - with entrepreneurial and sustainable business skills, which have become more and more essential after the Government’s introduction of the ‘Big Society’

policy agenda. Today charities and community groups are often left alone to carry out work that was traditionally done by the public sector: the Big Society Funding CIC sets out to help them develop and sustain their activities – even to flourish despite on-going austerity.

In the last four years the CIC has been involved in so much inspiring VCSE activity. Among the many highlights: it has successfully fundraised (in Ipswich, Harrow and Blackpool), provided organisations with business and consultation plans, produced evidence-based evaluations, supported women’s services, secured development grants for a range of community projects, carried out social action research, worked with refugees, migrant communities and developed programmes aimed at building skills and employability among economically inactive members of local communities often struggling to participate in local civil society.

The CIC’s mission is centred on a commitment to breaking down social barriers and promoting engagement in civil society, maximizing positive possibilities for communities in need, developing individual capacity, encouraging solidarity and assisting those people – **Fiery Spirits** - willing to put themselves out there in society.

## Big Society Funding donates laptops to help give children in Africa a brighter future

One of Big Society’s directors, Mark Ereira-Guyer, was inspired by the work being done for orphans in Zambia when he visited so vowed to help when he returned home to Bury St Edmunds.

Mark, who is also a local Green councillor, contacted Reboot Cambridge CIC, which recycles computers, and the CIC bought two laptops to send to the orphanage project.

The project, run by wildlife guide James Zulu, aims to give shelter to the orphans and provide them with skills to have a happier and more secure future.

James Zulu said: “The children were so excited when they received the laptops. They were crowding around and could not wait for me to show them what they could use them for. They will make a huge difference to their lives and learning.”

Mark said: “I am pleased this small donation has made a big difference to many children. It would be great if any other local organisations or individuals could see if they have any computers they could donate, to help even more disadvantaged children.”

Contact James Zulu: jameszulu92@gmail.com

More information about refurbishing ICT for the VCSE sector: [www.rebootcambridge.org.uk](http://www.rebootcambridge.org.uk)





# What has been the work so far?

## Four case studies: what people say about Big Society Funding CIC

Several client feedback exercises have been organised – most recently 88% of respondents described the CIC’s approach as ‘excellent’- the other 12% said ‘good’. In early 2015 researcher and writer **Giulia Damiani** interviewed VCSE

leaders of four of the exceptional community groups the CIC has worked with. The following are some of their own words on our collaborations and what has been achieved.

### Harrow Women’s Centre

*“The centre is a fantastic supporter of women. It offers a ‘safe’ environment for women of all walks of life who are suffering some kind of dysfunction. They provide a nurturing, professional place that women can access knowing that their safety and welfare is paramount.”*

Respondent to Big Society Funding CIC survey

Harrow Women’s Centre is a twenty years-old charity that offers remarkable services and unique support to vulnerable women. This includes providing information and advice, counselling, domestic violence outreach, self-help groups and complementary therapy.

Following public sector cuts Harrow Council withdrew its funding support for the centre for 2013/2014, giving the charity a ‘sense of being orphaned’. Big Society Funding was commissioned to produce an impact report that proved how women in need of support were receiving an excellent quality of service in Harrow from this centre. The charity benefited the lives of over 5,500 people living in Harrow; and 75% of respondents to our consultant survey rated their services 10 out of 10.

Our work helped to successfully secure £204,000 of core funding from the Big Lottery Fund to be used by the centre in the next five years.



**Ruth Hiscock,**  
Harrow Women’s Centre Manager

#### How it has been working with Big Society Funding?

“Brilliant, very professional and fun. They have an extensive knowledge of this sector, collaborating with them has been amazing. We were due to close last January, and instead I got a phone call on January the 18th saying we got 5 years funding; it’s all thanks to Mark and James.”

#### What have been the best bits and the less good bits?

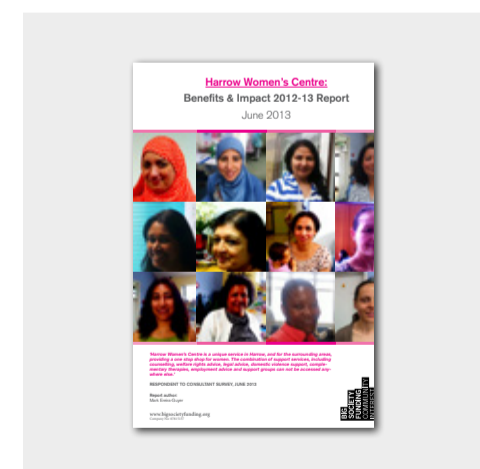
“It was great to learn where we had to improve, with the impact report. It wasn’t something we were used to doing; every year we’d just get council money. In this way we learnt how to better ourselves. We’ve improved our database, thanks to the impact assessment report; now we’re constantly getting feedback surveys done, and getting clients engagement, which is very important. Since the Lottery funding started, we’re now at a stage where we can’t cope with the number of clients we’ve got.”

#### How optimistic do you feel about the future viability of your organisation?

“When the lottery money runs out there’s going to be no more funding. We’re preparing a list of organisations we can approach in a few years; we’re doing a lot of research on this. We need to make our charity a social enterprise and make it sustainable; since we got the Lottery funding we had another two successful applications, because funding bodies now see that we are financially stable.”

#### What else could Big Society, or other similar organisations, do to help you to thrive further?

“The report they did last year it was our first ever. It’d be very useful to have a study on us done quite frequently. You learn from evaluations. Someone from the outside looking in can see where the flaws are. That’s the only way to improve yourself.”



We provided  
**195**  
days of pro bono help

We raised  
**£1.9m**  
for financially fragile  
VCSE organisations

We organised  
**5**  
Ministerial meetings

We wrote & submitted  
**10**  
Big Lottery funding bids



We trained  
**18**  
community activists  
to become ‘Fiery Spirits’

We advised  
**9**  
new CICs on being set up

We evaluated  
**9**  
VCSE organisation’s services

We secured  
**Big Lottery grant**  
to advise VCSE  
on European funding



## Community Office - Queens Park Residents Association, Blackpool

*“It is the hub of the community, somewhere to take problems and ideas for change”*

*“Can’t sing their praises highly enough- the best of Blackpool”*

Queens Park residents, Big Society Funding’s Survey and Focus Group 2014

Queens Park Residents Association (QPRA) Community Office makes a tremendously positive difference to lives of 1,000’s of people in Blackpool. This association’s action is to improve the financial and social well-being of the residents of the highly disadvantaged council estate of Queens Park in the Brunswick ward of Blackpool, and more recently of the nearby Mereside Housing Estate in Clifton Ward.

The Community Office has become an inspirational ‘community hub’ of activity; QPRA is transforming the lives of local residents, in areas where nearly a third of children are living in poverty. Amid a challenging service environment and austerity, they help very fragile, vulnerable and impoverished residents to be re-located to other areas of Blackpool.

As revealed by a survey conducted by Big Society Funding CIC, nearly 1,500 residents each year benefit from the personal and social assistance offered by the Community Office. Nearly 90% of people interviewed affirmed that they had used the services provided by QPRA on a weekly basis for advice, support, information, internet access and general guidance.

Although the Community Office had successfully overcome many urgent issues, the level of poverty and unemployment in Blackpool and a whole range of other pressing issues remains high. Working together, Big Society Funding and QPRA raised £496,727 (with a fresh Lottery grant) that will fund these activities and more:

- Continue to provide community service to former and present Queen’s Park Estate residents who are still experiencing high levels of deprivation and poverty
- Extend services to the nearby disadvantaged Mereside Housing Estate
- Provide financial, housing, personal and job advice
- Support individual and community development.

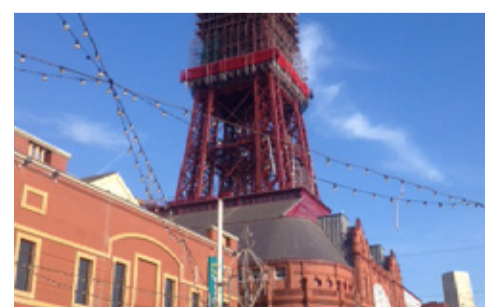
## Queens Park Residents Association, comments from the Trustee Directors

*“As a small charity working in a deprived area – funding is vital to carry out our work within the Community. As funding becomes harder to obtain – we felt it was time to take a fresh approach to writing bids and an overarching report. We spent time looking for specialist fundraisers and bid writers to help us in our quest. We stumbled upon Big Society Funding and arranged an initial meeting with James and Mark. We were immediately impressed with their approach and enthusiasm to the project – the two trustees that met with the “Guys” were impressed straight away with their ability to understand our requirements.*

*After conversations – a plethora of emails back and forth – customer involvement surveys – finally we had a finished evaluation report – which was exactly as we wanted – well written – not too much official speak – laid out well and easy to read and follow. This report was used to support bids to funders, and the feedback we have had is positive.*

*To this end we have been awarded a grant from the Big Lottery, which will enable us to carry out our work for a further five years in and around two of the Northwest’s most deprived council estates. This will benefit in excess of 5,000 residents, by having our organisation working in the community. It’s without doubt that we as an organisation could not have done this without the excellent work by Mark and James from Big Society Funding.*

*Our organisation is a small charity based around 2 council estates in the North West – concentrating on helping residents with benefit claims, housing and ASB Issues, and getting back into work. As a small organisation we often rely on the good will of the local housing provider and council to help us achieve our aims. We are pleased with the work that Mark and James have done for our organisation and look forward to working on future projects with them”*



## PARCA - Promoting African Refugees Community Association, Peterborough

*“The programme of ‘Inclusive Communities’ is very capturing. Just by reading the name you get a feeling that everyone is invited”*

Patricia Mendes, participant in Inclusive Communities

Set up in 1992, this charity’s mission is to facilitate the effective transition of refugees, asylum seekers and EU migrants into British society, and to support their integration into their new homeland. PARCA offers a wide range of important support services, such as general advice, counselling and housing advice to improve refugee and migrants’ lives.

Big Society has been working (pro bono) with PARCA to help them with consultation, business planning and grant applications. It was pleasing to see that in the survey conducted by the CIC it was revealed that service users rate PARCA’s services very highly, with the average score being 9.44 out of 10.

PARCA is one of the partners of Big Society’s ‘Inclusive Communities’ project, a programme of free workshops, events and training designed to build skills, confidence and employability amongst economically inactive members

of all – but especially Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities in the East of England – this has been financed by a Community Grant from the European Union and co-financed by the Skills Funding Agency.

The programme was devised to improve the representation of different communities within public institutions. Despite the growing number of non-White British population, local diversity is not reflected in public-facing organisations (including VCSE) offering services to the whole community.

Inclusive Communities has had a successful start in Peterborough (and most recently in Ipswich), with over a dozen participants. Big Society is now working towards recruiting and training more people from BAME communities to become board members, volunteers and paid staff in charities and public sector organisations.

Again, on an unpaid basis, the CIC has submitted a successful first stage Reaching Communities bid for PARCA to develop its social support, training and capacity building work. For a small fee it has also written the Stage 2 application and provide guidance on evaluation requirements and much more besides.

## Moez Nathu, PARCA Refugee & Migrant Support



**How it has been working with Big Society?**

“PARCA has worked with Big Society Funding for a year, we feel that we have the right persons to support the organisation’s work. We have received from their support the chance to unlock the issues with Big Lottery Fund and make links with the Lottery’s local officers.”

**What have they helped you to achieve?**

“We have achieved to resolve the issue with BIG Lottery Fund and now we have access to an Award for All grant. We have been successful in all bids and we are also at the first successful stage for Reaching Communities.”

**Have they helped you to do your work in a different way?**

“Yes, the way Big Society works is good and its commitment to support groups like us is a great idea.”

**How could they improve?**

“To improve your services you will need more time to spend with organisations and support them in fundraising.”

**How optimistic do you feel about the future viability of your organisation?**

“Very optimist. We feel Big Society takes seriously its work and always informs step by step what our organisation needs to do next to improve our work.”





## Ipswich & Suffolk Council for Racial Equality

*“Working with Big Society CIC on preparing the two stages of a Lottery ‘Reaching Communities’ bid for our project ‘Tackling Discrimination In the East’ has been a real joy. It has been challenging, inspiring, thought provoking, very educational and taken me frequently out of my comfort zone. Everything they have recommended me to do, from organising a focus group to considering how we self-evaluate has been of real benefit in changing the way we work. It has made me realise those who use our service and other stakeholders really value what we do and achieve; and that they are valuable assets, both in attracting new funding and ensuring the continued relevancy of our work to our community.”*

Audrey Ludwig, Ipswich & Suffolk Council for Racial Equality

Since 1977 ISCRE has sought to eliminate unlawful discrimination on the grounds of people’s race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, and to promote equality of opportunity between all persons, encouraging and advancing co-operation.



Big Society Funding has advised ISCRE on the development of new fundraising proposals and new income streams. It has produced evaluations for staff, trustees and other stakeholders.

In a time when this organisation was facing significant funding issues, the collaboration between the CIC and ISCRE managed to secure £294,839 in Lottery funds to tackle discrimination, and which allowed for the survival of this vital county-based charity.

ISCRE is also part of the team managing the Inclusive Communities programme and co-organised a conference to examine actions to be taken to improve diversity on public-facing organisations. The conference was attended by Labour’s Lisa Nandy MP and Suffolk County Council Chief Executive, Deborah Cadman plus a further 77 people.



## Phanuel Mutumburi, Director of ISCRE

### How it has been working with Big Society Funding?

“It has been an excellent experience working with this enterprise over several years.”

### What have been the best bits, and the less good bits?

“We enjoyed collaborating with them on the Creating Inclusive ‘Big Society’ Communities project activities, including the State of the Sector survey, the How to Succeed in Suffolk conference in March 2014 and the capacity building surgery in November 2014.”

### What have they helped you to achieve?

“Big Society Funding helped us in improving the capacity of local Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities to access local and national funding; identifying ‘Fiery Spirits’ from BAME communities that can be supported to take up leadership positions in public and civic society; conducting a review of our Suffolk Law Advice Centre and reporting how our work has benefitted the diverse communities of Suffolk. They got us a grant of nearly £300,000 from the Lottery!”

### Have they helped you to do your work in a different way?

“They have improved our ability to identify and report the impact that our work has, not only on our clients but also on the wider community. We are in a much better place now through our working together; we hope that this relationship can only get better in future.”

### What else could Big Society Funding - or a similar supportive organisation - do to help you thrive further?

“Continue to support and review our services and organisational structures in line with the changing operating environment, without deviating from our core values. And also build some funding for community groups like us, to co-produce future engagement activities.”



## Four years - what has been achieved? Message from the team



We’ve loved our work with VCSE leaders, collaborating and co-producing solutions – despite the very austere financial climate. We are delighted that our CIC, combined with the work of our other consultancies, has now helped charities and social enterprises across the country raise almost £20m.

Since our social enterprise was set up, our projects have helped individuals, groups and communities in a wide range of ways:

We’ve been offering workshops for diverse communities designed to increase individual capacity, explore diversity, enable organisations to fully realize their potential and encourage ‘Big Society’ activists. We’ve covered accessing funds for their projects, planning, media relations, how to prepare a CV and get a volunteer or job opportunity.

The programme includes personal development components as follows:

**Self-belief & personal confidence | Defining personal values | Identifying & evidencing community problems | Formulating a response - a solution to problems identified | Promoting myself & my community venture | Regular & Digital communications skills | Being a Community Leader | How public agencies and charities work | Lobbying for change | Making a difference on a board, and | Fundraising**

*“Big Society Funding CIC provided research and intelligence from the VCSE sector which made the first round of Prize Challenge funding possible.”*

Michael Barnes, European Programme Manager, Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP

Our social action research involved 79 VCSE organisations and 18 public sector ones and showed poor levels of diverse representation in the above-mentioned areas, despite a growing proportion of the local population being non-White British.

Of the 100s of trustees on the boards of these charities just 28% were women, 2% were from a BAME background, 8% were disabled & 4% were young people - all well below the reflected wider local population; furthermore, just 25% of board members/councillors on local public bodies were women; and only 3% were from a BAME community

September 2014 was the start of our pilot programme Inclusive Communities: a series of events, workshops to recruit and train people from BAME communities in Peterborough, Ipswich and King’s Lynn.

We’ve co-organised public events to showcase the value of the voluntary sector and engagement work, such as the visit of Shadow Civil Society Minister Lisa Nandy MP to Ipswich, where she spoke about ‘reviving civil society and making it work for all.

Some other major achievements include:

- We’ve been commissioned to produce nine external evaluations – in Ipswich, Blackpool and Harrow.
- We were engaged by Harrow Council to identify the infrastructure support needs of the VCSE sector, and set up a new model of service delivery.
- We also led the setting up and development of a VCSE sector sub group within the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to engage the sector, this followed in 2013 with the launch of the Prize Challenge for the Voluntary & Social Enterprise Sector: a £1 million LEP programme awarding £30,000 prizes to those VCSE organisations focused on skills development for disadvantaged groups

*‘I have found working with Mark and James at Big Society Funding very productive. Their knowledge of the voluntary and social enterprise sector, social policy and local demographics has been a great asset in the work we have been trying to do. Additionally their ability to work collaboratively with a range of stake holders has resulted in ideas and concepts being turned into a strategy and proposals which resonate with the sector as being appropriate and effective recommendations.’*

Dr Lynn Morgan (Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP Board 2011-13 & CEO Arthur Rank Hospice Charity)

- We’ve worked on a pro-bono basis with an exciting young charity in Islington, Spark Inside. Using an innovative model imported from Canada, this charity is succeeding in transforming young offenders’ lives for the better. We’ve helped to refine their business plan: £30,000 were secured from Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and this is being used to help the charity to grow further.

- We were commissioned by Peterborough CVS to lead on wide ranging consultation exercise which resulted in the setting up of consortium of Peterborough-based VSCE organisations, which is now going from strength to strength and ready to bid for funding and public service contracts.

- We completed an exciting piece of research for YMCA Cambridgeshire & Peterborough aimed at developing a long-term sustainable fundraising strategy.

