



Canny wi' Cash

Older People Deciding on Grants for Older People's Groups



Scottish
Co-production
Network



People Powered
Health & Wellbeing
Shifting the balance of power

Background

Canny wi' Cash is one of a number of projects funded through Edinburgh's Reshaping Care for Older People Change Fund Partnership. The aim for the Partnership is to encourage a shift from reactive to anticipatory and preventative care of older people. Key to achieving this is to release the capacities of older people themselves, **and enabling more co-productive relationships between people who use services and people who provide services.**

EVOC's vision of co-production encompasses changed relationships within service delivery, policy development, and budget decision making where people who use services are able to contribute to these processes. Canny wi' Cash is an example of what such a relationship could look like, using participatory budgeting as a means to empower people affected by budget decisions to make the decisions themselves.

This case study describes how older people across the city spoke up, making decisions on small-grant expenditure for Older People's services. It provides a summary of the project and reflections from some of the partners involved.



Starting points

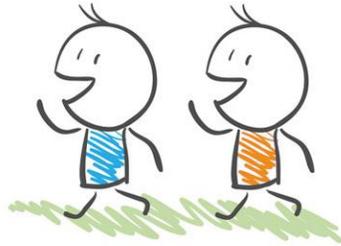
Rather than use a participatory budgeting approach where people are invited to gather in one place and at one time to vote, the project team decided to use a distributed model instead. This involved creating a voting fortnight where the team would go out to where older people were and present the project ideas in an anonymised and uniform way.

“We believe this was a first – engaging with the community where they were, and ensuring that people across the city had an equal opportunity to vote on each project idea.”

The project team recruited a Steering Group which included representation from the City of Edinburgh Council and NHS Lothian (funders of the Reshaping Care for Older People Change Fund) and from third sector older people's groups which delivered the work. It also drew on a wealth of expertise in planning, funding and delivering services as well as – crucially – engaging with older people across the city.

Key to delivering the project was a team of seven skilled and enthusiastic facilitators. They were the front-facing aspect of the whole project, engaging directly with older people, and who brought their own skills and experience to bear, which helped make Canny wi' Cash the success that it was.

Working together



The project team announced and began to promote the project, inviting groups of older people – whether formally constituted or not – to put forward their project proposals using an accessible, simple application form.

As the project proposals were coming in, the team began to plan for the ‘voting fortnight.’ This included:

- designing and testing the voting system;
- recruiting and briefing facilitators;
- recruiting and supporting groups to participate in the voting;
- reporting regularly to the Steering Group; and
- continuing to encourage groups of older people to submit proposals before the deadline.

In total 101 project bids were submitted, valued altogether at £106,000. This was twice the available pot of money.

Once the team knew there were enough proposals to run a contest, the practicalities of the voting fortnight were determined. At every voting venue facilitators would set out up

to a dozen flash-cards each describing a project proposal, in enough detail to help voters come to a decision, but not enough detail to identify the group seeking funding.

Alongside each flash-card would be a clear jar to collect voting tokens. Each voter would get five tokens or votes although they would not have to use all five votes if they did not want to – tokens could be returned.

The project bid ranked top was the one voted for **not by the greatest number of voters, but by the highest proportion of voters who could have voted for any given project.** The project team knew exactly which projects had been voted on at which venues, along with how many voters were present at each venue and were therefore able to work out this proportion. Over the voting fortnight, facilitators visited a range of places across the city where older people gathered: day centres, lunch clubs, drop-in centres, even an art class or two.



The participants were key to Canny wi' Cash. Older people made time to listen to the facilitators, took care to consider the options before them, assessed the anonymised project ideas being presented, and cast their votes with care and consideration.

Challenges

There were a number of challenges in both the planning and delivery of the project. One was to make sure that the project, whilst trying out innovative consultative processes, did not lose its strategic focus. It was agreed therefore that all the activities funded would demonstrate clearly how they support the Reshaping Care for Older People Change Fund programme outcomes.

At the same time however, it was trying to be innovative and truly “bottom up” so it was also agreed that the Steering Group would oversee the process, manage risks as they emerged but take a strictly ‘hands-off’ approach to the decisions which came through as a result of the voting. All agreed that voters must have the final say on what was funded if it fitted with the Change Fund outcomes.

Of 101 project proposals received, one was judged by the Steering Group to be unsuitable, so 100 bids were put forward for voting. It was decided that each group of voters would

consider a handful of project ideas as this was too many to be voted on by every group.

A major challenge was designing a voting system that everyone understood to be open, inclusive and fair. EVOC spent a lot of time therefore publishing the scheme, encouraging older people’s groups to apply for funds and the facilitators also devoted time to visiting groups and clubs to explain the process and ensure people understood the voting procedure.

“At the start I saw a potential risk with the voting system – whether it would swing towards the well-known people and organisations.”

Steering Group Member

The Steering Group wanted there to be equity for each project proposal and for older people voting. Therefore a system was developed to ensure that each proposal would get equal ‘exposure’ i.e. approximately the same number of voters would see each project proposal and each voter would have an equal ‘say’.

During the voting fortnight there were also some surprises. In one or two groups people were unsure, at first, what was being asked of them. In discussion with them, facilitators learned that being asked their views was something they were not used to,

hence the initial difficulty! The team also had one occasion when some members in one group were less able than the project team had hoped to engage with the voting process. On that occasion however their carers were able to help them understand and engage with the process.

Outcomes

Over the 'voting fortnight' 312 Older People across Edinburgh took part in the voting events and through that process agreed to fund 56 projects to the tune of £56,000.

"Our voice is being heard at last"

Canny wi' Cash delivered a number of important project outcomes which included:

- Older People felt properly included in a democratic process and learned about activities to get involved with.
- Groups across the city learned about funding available and contributed to an innovative way of distributing money.
- Groups were able to plan to improve what they do, or to do something new.
- Older people in local groups made community links/connections in their neighbourhood.

- People learned about Participatory Budgeting and are more able to advocate for it in the future.
- EVOG staff and Steering Group members learned about the activities and range of local groups who operate across Edinburgh.

Canny wi' Cash also delivered wider outcomes for the Reshaping Care for Older People programme. These related to personal outcomes for older people, including:

- Reduced isolation and improved mental health;
- Carers were helped to be more resilient; and
- Older people's confidence improved

Why is this co-production?

The team's approach to participatory budgeting was a form of co-production: older people were able to **co-commission** the services which matter to them. Older people's representatives were involved in the Steering Group, helped design the process and most importantly, older people from across the city made the decisions about which projects and activities would be funded.

Assets – a fundamental premise of the project was that older people themselves could make sound judgements about what mattered in their lives and those of their peers. Older people across the city were helped to speak up and make decisions on

small-grants for older people's services which led to a variety of project outcomes and wider Change Fund programme outcomes.

Capacity – rather than providing direct support by mainstream agencies, groups were enabled to harness their own capacity and put their skills to best use for individual and community benefit. Key features of the activities supported were:

- providing practical equipment;
- helping groups bring people together; and
- enabling groups to cover practical expenses associated with their activities.

This meant that groups could respond in quick, easy and practical ways to the needs of those they were supporting.



Mutuality – the project was designed and delivered on a partnership basis. The Steering Group was drawn from the City of Edinburgh Council, NHS Lothian and the city's thriving third sector. The group was prepared to share the risks involved and respect the decisions made by older people in the voting process.

Alongside the Steering Group described above, a variety of people made important contributions to the project. The older people's groups generously gave of their time and their understanding of what work was needed to improve the lives of Edinburgh's older people. The facilitators spread the word, engaging with older people with a range of abilities, supporting them to make choices about what work they'd like to see, recording the results of voting at each venue, and capturing the participants' comments.

Networks – the project demonstrated how public sector agencies could work effectively with and through third sector bodies. Mainstream agency representatives helped provide strategic direction and ensure the project had an effective fit with wider Change Fund programme outcomes. EVOC was able to use its knowledge of community resources and networks to successfully reach older people in 29 venues across the city.

Catalysts – the project demonstrated how the strategic intentions of public bodies can be successfully translated into effective outcomes by devolving power and responsibility to third sector partners. It also enabled a variety of outcomes to be achieved in a far less complicated and time consuming manner than if it had been managed directly.

Lessons and learning

The reflections of those involved demonstrate a number of lessons, not just about Canny wi' Cash but about ways of engaging people and communities and how this can stimulate new thinking about ways of allocating resources.

Lessons about innovative ways of allocating scarce resources

“Canny wi' Cash proved that a little goes a long way. It demonstrated how you can make a difference to people's lives by providing support to the networks that support them.”

NHS Steering Group Member

“With a small bit of money the project seemed to happen seamlessly and without too much angst or worry. I think that was because of the simplicity of the approach. It is an example of working successfully on a preventative agenda. Questions for me now are how we can learn from it – how we take lessons into wider budget processes and how this can inform our wider consultation processes as a Council.”

Edinburgh City Council Steering Group Member

“One of the lessons from this is that the Third Sector is far better able in some respects to take on the challenges of the Change Fund than the NHS – large organisations are less able to take up small, innovative initiatives working with and engaging people and communities.”

NHS Steering Group Member

Lessons about engaging people and communities

There were a number of lessons about the capacity that is needed to engage with people and communities. For example, carers played a crucial role in enabling older people to participate in this process – more than had been anticipated. Also where people are less able to participate, more than one facilitator is better so that people can be engaged with in smaller groups, pairs or even one to one if need be. Finding out more in advance about the capacity of people in different groups can help ensure an effective engagement event or process.

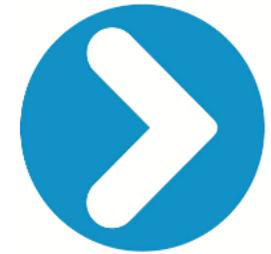


A range of voters also expressed their view to the facilitators, highlighting that it was important the process was straightforward and easy to understand.

“It's much better to ask people like us to make these decisions. Politicians don't understand what it's like to be poor and lonely - you need to be in that position to know what it's really like.”

“I was glad to have a chance to vote, it's more democratic this way”

Further information:



This case study was produced as part of the resource ‘Co-production – how we make a difference together’, developed by the Scottish Co-production Network, the Joint Improvement Team, the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland and Governance International.

A full description of the project “[Our Voice Is Being Heard At Last](#)” is available on [EVOC’s website](#).

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