



“MAKING IT WORK”

**A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE FOR PROJECTS
FUNDED BY THE HOME OFFICE UNDER**

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Introduction

The Challenge Fund and European Refugee Fund (ERF) are two funding programmes administered by the Home Office. Over £6 million is distributed annually to around 100 projects across the United Kingdom. The funds are designed to promote innovative projects that address specific social needs amongst refugee communities. Projects must be for the benefit of people with full refugee status (under the 1951 UN Convention on the Treatment of Refugees), or those with Humanitarian Protection (HP) or Discretionary Leave (DL) status in the United Kingdom.

For the last four years Michael Bell Associates have been contracted by the Home Office to conduct research and evaluation on the two programmes in general and on the individual funded projects in particular.

The research revealed many lessons about the pitfalls of managing a short-term project with relatively ambitious goals, lessons involving the late start up of services, making services accessible and sustainable, and meeting targets and outputs. Researchers also saw projects performing to very high levels indeed

The Home Office agreed to highlight the achievements of some of these projects so that the principles on which they had established reliable and effective work programmes could reach a wider audience and perhaps influence others in the process.

From May to July 2004 researchers visited eight Good Practice Projects, funded either by the Challenge Fund or ERF, in different parts of the country. Interviews were held with project coordinators, staff and, separately, with service users. Documents were furnished and reviewed. This research allowed us to produce **Making it Work** which we hope will provide a source of reference for projects of all sizes, whether they are in receipt of Home Office funding or not.

How to use this Guide

Whilst it is possible to read this Guide from cover to cover, the Guide can also be used by staff in search of ideas and suggestions on good practice - whether that be how to conduct user feedback or how to ensure services are actively promoted. Each chapter deals with a different aspect of good practice.

Making Plans and Making Money considers the steps organisations took to design and plan their projects and how they went about the task of securing funding.

Making it Public and Easy offers suggestions on how to attract the users who need your services and how, once they are there, to retain them. It also deals with the issue of making services accessible to users.

Making Friends stresses the importance of forming partnerships and networks so that the aims projects set are effectively met and learning shared.

Making it Happen focuses on implementation of plans and considers, among other things, how organisations support project management and operation.

Making it Better demonstrates the benefits of monitoring and evaluation and how to incorporate lessons learned to meet needs more effectively.

Making it Last addresses the vital, but often overlooked, issue of creating sustainability so that projects can continue to deliver valuable services needed by their users.

The Guide concludes with ***Making a Splash***, a showcase for Good Practice Projects which brought the benefits of the services they had delivered to a wider audience and thereby raised their profile and increased their influence.

How the Good Practice Projects were Selected

The eight projects involved in this work were selected by Michael Bell Associates in conjunction with the Home Office.

As part of the overall monitoring and evaluation programme for the two streams of funding, Michael Bell Associates visited every single project funded through the ERF and Challenge Fund and interviewed project managers between January and April 2004.

Selection for the Good Practice Projects was made upon the basis of these interviews, and to ensure that we had a good mixture of the different kinds of projects the Home Office funds. The projects we have selected are not necessarily the best projects. Indeed, there are many excellent projects that have not been part of this study. However, for this study we

could only cover a small amount of the good work being supported by the Funds, and we hope that the projects not included in the Guide understand this and do not feel offended.

The Good Practice Projects

The authors were anxious to include as much diversity in the range of Good Practice Projects as possible. Therefore organisations were chosen to reflect a mix in size, area of work, geographical location and client group. The Good Practice Projects chosen were:

- **The Asphaleia Project:** This project, based in Worthing, West Sussex, specifically provides services to young people, predominantly unaccompanied refugee children. They have developed a vast network of partnerships at all levels from the local social services department and education authority to other refugee community organisations. They currently run a range of different projects based in both Sussex and London all of which contribute to providing holistic services to the client group. Through careful and effective planning each project supports and interlinks with the others. Three projects, originally funded by the Home Office, have successfully attracted funding from other sources highlighting the organisation's ability to mainstream services. Their specialist reputation in refugee issues earned through Home Office funded work is such that they have been invited to sit on a number of advisory panels influencing policy, to the benefit of their users.
- **Cardiff County Council/SOVA – Refugee Housing Advice Project:** This project has built upon existing tried and tested ideas such as providing bond guarantees to prospective tenants. Their aim is, through a mix of practical support and strategic partnership, to ensure that single refugees gain access to secure housing within the private sector. What struck the research authors as impressive was the way in which the organisations had engaged partners across their areas of interest - private sector (landlords), public sector (the various Council departments) and the voluntary sector (referring organisations/other sources of support for the users), and the added value that these relationships brought to the project. Refugees appear to have benefited from a range of holistic services around which efforts are coordinated.
- **Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service, a division of Education Action International (formerly known as World University Service (UK) – Promoting Effective Employment for Refugees (PEER) Project:** RETAS, with its main office in London and another in Leeds, has for many years been at the forefront of providing education, training and employment advice and support to refugees, both on a one-to-one and group basis. They do so in a variety of ways including training courses. The Home Office funded project consists of advice and guidance on

studying in the UK with a range of training courses (ICT, Job Search, ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages - and Business Start up) along with employment support. All beneficiaries are given an initial needs assessment and an action plan is drafted with each user that aims at progression towards employment. Staff communication and planning is highly effective and the mechanisms that they have in place for measuring progress and identifying gaps/needs in service delivery are excellent. Working with their partner agency, Islington African Partnership, they have successfully devised processes that are designed to keep participants on courses and prevent drop out.

- **Evelyn Oldfield Unit - Refugee Integration Initiatives:** Based in London, the Evelyn Oldfield Unit offers an example of a project that undertakes second-tier work to meet the needs of numerous refugee community organisations within the capital and beyond. Their involvement in the development of forums, capacity building, research and strategic policy work have all contributed to making the refugee sector generally more responsive to the needs of their users. The Home Office funded project is part research and part development of forums. Particularly noteworthy in this context is the emphasis that is placed on precise needs assessment and consultation with the beneficiary organisations.

- **Princes Trust Scotland: Shared Road Project:** Working in partnership with Strathclyde Police and Glasgow City Council youth services, this project has been responsible for groundbreaking work that has brought together young refugees and asylum seekers with young indigenous residents in the Red Road area in Glasgow. In addressing the difficult task of integrating these communities in an area initially hostile to the dispersal of refugees, the Trust has made excellent use of a youth forum to inform progress. Not only has the project assisted young refugees and asylum seekers by helping them to make friends and integrate into their new communities but they also bring a wide variety of skills and confidence to the indigenous people in the area. As a result of the project's work and its effective use of partnerships Strathclyde Police have stated that the project "has assisted in a notable reduction in youth crime and anti-social behaviour in the area" and the model is being considered as one that can be applied in other areas of social policy.

- **West Midlands Consortium for Asylum Support (WMCARS) - Community Integration Partnership:** This organisation has assembled a highly effective

partnership of previously disparate organisations in the West Midlands. The Home Office funded project has been in operation since March 2003 and is based around integrating women who have recently received positive decisions on their asylum applications. The focus is on employment and their work includes a range of different services such as training in IT and support groups. Success in making the premises accessible at all times to this user group has contributed immensely to making services available to a traditionally difficult to reach community.

- **The Women Business Development Agency – Plymouth Refugee Integration Project:** This project delivers a package of support to refugees in the South West to enable them to set up their own businesses. Their activities include mentoring and training. The researchers were particularly impressed by the attention paid to needs assessment, allowing the group to respond effectively to the problems and barriers facing their users, and also to the emphasis placed on monitoring outcomes and successes. The project has been active in building networks and partnerships in a region with which refugees have not been traditionally associated.
- **Day-Mer Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre:** Day-Mer has had longstanding links with the Turkish and Kurdish communities across North London. Their users are both refugees and non-refugees. They have been involved in numerous projects designed to build bridges from exclusion into integration for their users and have a very successful track record in attracting funds for innovative projects, many of which have training as a central element.

Chapter 1 - Making Plans and Making Money

Evidence from the eight Good Practice Projects is clear. Developing an effective and convincing plan was key in getting the project funded and in managing the activities to achieve positive results for users. A simple plan should define:

- ***The nature of the need*** – what are the problems and who do they affect?
- ***How the need will be addressed*** – what are the services you will provide, how will they be delivered (outreach), and the extent of the services or product (outputs)
- ***The anticipated changes or outcomes that will take place as a result of the project*** – the ways in which lives will change for the better: for example employment, qualifications, better health.

The universal view from the projects was that by spending time in producing a plan, by gathering the evidence to build a case and by consulting with staff and other organisations on the best way to proceed, they benefited in a number of ways.

“A plan that we could keep coming back to ensured we maintained our direction and focus – it was OK if it needed to be reviewed from time to time.” (Asphaleia Project)

“We were able to dismiss some of the things we initially thought of because we found they were unrealistic after speaking to staff.” (Evelyn Oldfield Unit)

“Having the plan provided a great morale boost for staff as they saw progress towards our goals achieved.” (Women’s Business Development Agency)

“The process we adopted in putting the plan together disciplined us to define exactly what it was we were going to do. I think that that is what funders want above everything else.” (Asphaleia Project)

“The key success of this project is that it is needed and does work. There was a proven demand for help and advice with housing in this area which we identified through our work. Delays in take-up were avoided - we have already secured 29 tenancies and we have only been running for 4 months.” (Cardiff County Council/SOVA)

Case Study – The Planning Process

The success of the **Asphaleia Project** in meeting the needs of their young refugee clients owes everything to thorough preparation and planning, according to staff.

Firstly, the organisation ensures that their internal structures encourage a constant stream of ideas from members of staff closely involved in the lives and needs of their users. They achieve this through:

- regular *one to one supervision sessions* with managers
- *staff training days* which provide a forum for generating ideas and sharing information across the organisation about what works (and what doesn't) in other projects
- *team meetings* where staff take the time to build on each others' ideas.

Secondly, the project team (usually three or four individuals) will book a venue outside work – sometimes a small function room at a hotel. An intensive brainstorming session will identify the key elements of a proposed project to see if it is viable. Questions such as which users the project will be targeted at, which partner organisations to involve, the geographical area to be covered, how the services will be delivered and what it will cost are all discussed. Challenging and testing other people's ideas is welcomed as it tends to make the project ideas more rigorous and will pre-empt the concerns of funders. On occasions, these sessions lead to rejection of the idea, which staff regard as a worthwhile outcome.

“There is nothing worse than spending valuable time and funder's money in running a project that had no chance of achieving what it set out to.”

Thirdly, a small scale pilot with a limited target group will be run over a short period. This is sometimes funded but more often is supported through the project's own resources. According to staff this has a number of advantages:

- It proves the idea works (*“Funders always respond favourably when they can see evidence of success”*)
- It ensures that anything that does not work can be put right before it affects the overall quality of a much larger project

- It prevents “over promising” on targets that are clearly unrealistic. (*“If we set goals that we do not deliver, everyone ends up disappointed including funders but also users and it demoralises staff.”*)

Only then, with a properly thought out idea that has proved successful on a small scale, will the Asphaleia Project consider seeking the most appropriate funder to support the project.

Importance is attached to incorporating what was learned in the pilot in the funding application. Funders appreciate evidence demonstrating that their money will be effectively spent. Even a small indication that the methods being proposed will work could make the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful application.

Staff believe that their selectiveness about which ideas they fundraise for has increased their credibility with funders. Instead of submitting numerous applications to a wide range of funders they have chosen carefully and their substantial growth over the last five years proves the success of this approach. They are also keen to learn why certain applications fail in order to incorporate this learning into future strategies.

Tools to Help with Planning

Mapping

Staff at **Community Integration Partnership**, which coordinates facilities and work undertaken by a range of projects targeting refugees in the West Midlands, spent a significant period before their Home Office application planning how the project would evolve. They carried out a mapping exercise in order to identify existing service provision for refugee communities across the region, particularly for women, and to identify what and where the gaps were. In addition, statistical data was collated from the Refugee Council, the Midlands Refugee Council and Refugee Action to find out more about refugee communities and where people were settling.

Staff felt that gathering this information and providing a reasoned argument for how funding could meet proven needs was instrumental in having their project recognised. The links made with other organisations and the knowledge they acquired of their target service users made the services they provided both appropriate and popular.

User Consultation

Involving service users at the planning stage and before submitting a funding application proved fruitful for the **Prince's Trust in Scotland**, a Glasgow project that seeks to bring together young refugees and young members of indigenous communities.

Contact was made with the pupils' forum at All Saints Secondary School, which had previously worked in partnership with the Trust. The input of the young people on a range of issues, most importantly how they wanted to spend their time at the youth club, was a vital ingredient in successfully integrating young refugees and asylum seekers in the area. Aware that it was vital to engage local youth (a notoriously difficult section of the community to reach) in the work of the project, the staff paid careful attention to this element of the planning process.

Through agreement with the school, the pupils' forum was approached on subsequent occasions to give their input to plans. This has made later funding ideas more authentic and relevant to needs.

Speaking directly to users has been built into the current work of the project too. For example, at the centre where young people meet, a short session is held to discuss proposed activities for that night, enabling users to contribute directly to the development of the project. This gives them a sense of ownership and recognition that their voices are being heard.

Think Projects!

What has been interesting about each of the projects we researched is the way in which the planning process allowed staff and management committees to think *imaginatively* about the services they provide.

Many funders refuse applications from organisations where the proposed activities show no adaptation from the routine services they already provide, such as running advice sessions or ESOL classes. However, this does not mean that such core services cannot be funded. Developing a project that funders want to support may require joining core services in a coherent strategy made up of a number of elements, for example collaborating with another organisation to provide more holistic support or combining activities such as training volunteers to provide services.

All the projects researched discovered that using a group planning process to come up with ideas to contribute to a funding proposal was far easier than expecting one person to do it alone.

These projects have realised through years of planning funding applications that they must avoid subsidising the project from their other funds. Consultation with staff other than those who will be delivering services overcame many problems. Finance workers, for example, were able to provide information on building a budget and avoiding underestimation of items such as travel and interpretation. Involving managers resulted in more accurate estimates of how much supervision and management they would be responsible for as well as views on which workers and what resources would need to be allocated to the project.

Making Plans and Making Money - Checklist

- **Never submit a funding application without first making a plan.**
- **Consult with colleagues, service users and other organisations to identify the key elements of the project and how it will be supported (i.e. what resources it will need),**
- **Spend time in defining why the project is needed, who the project will benefit, what services will be delivered and what outcomes or changes will come about as a result.**
- **Represent this information in funding applications succinctly whilst complying with the funder's requirements and priorities.**
- **Give funders evidence such as results of small pilots to reassure them that the proposal will be effective.**
- **Be selective about which funders are approached.**
- **Ensure the project to be funded is not simply a description of the services you provide with nothing else added.**
- **Allocate time to costing the application properly so it is not subsidised by the organisation's other resources.**

Chapter 2 - Making it Public and Making it Easy

A significant number of projects funded by Challenge Fund and ERF suffer from slow start up. In other words, it takes a number of months for the service to reach full capacity, and to see the number of service users originally anticipated.

This is a problem that some Good Practice Projects avoided by means of effective promotion and marketing. Some have also been imaginative in responding to potential barriers to clients' involvement.

Getting Services "Out There"

Day-Mer Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre, operating in North London, explains the popularity of their services by referring to their high publicity profile. Their promotional activities are an example of how many organisations, especially those serving black and minority ethnic communities, can build their reputations and secure demand for their services from the start.

Alliances with local newsletters/newspapers, especially those targeting Turkish and Kurdish communities were used to promote the work. When new services were funded, newsletters were invited to write up feature articles, ideally concentrating on real life cases.

Cultural festivals have also presented ideal opportunities to reach potential service users and spread the word about new activities. They secured the involvement and cooperation of co-educators who work with local schools and at Day-Mer's own offices by providing extra support to Turkish speaking students. This has not only created a community network between schools, parents and students but it has also reached people who would not ordinarily come into contact with the centre. As the coordinator says,

"This is one of the strengths of the centre....it engages kids and parents in education and provides facilities where they can learn together in a family environment. The message goes out to the rest of the community that the services are not daunting and encourages wider interest meaning our new services are all subscribed early."

Sometimes organisations need to go further than simply encouraging word of mouth.

Community Integration Partnership produced a video advertising the project's services to the client community's potential service users and volunteers. The advantage of visual promotion was that it overcame problems caused when service users could not read. It also communicated a much stronger sense of the organisation itself, its values and its work. Allowing potential service users and referring organisations to see others accessing the project provided very effective publicity and engaged funders and partner organisations on a much deeper level than a simple written report.

According to the project manager, the effect has been an upturn in demand for services.

Whilst not every organisation will have the resources to produce a video, this process does encourage staff to think imaginatively. Even small organisations have collaborated with arts colleges, for example, to produce visual promotional material at a modest cost.

Getting Service Users "In There"

Not only did the research show that projects needed to communicate to potential service users exactly what they did and how users would benefit, they had to make those services easy to access. Some methods concentrated on translation of materials into appropriate community languages and ensuring that premises met the needs of disabled people. However, the research discovered that it was equally important for projects to be continually sensitive to barriers that might prevent users from enjoying their services.

The **Prince's Trust in Scotland** offers a good example. The Trust responded to parents' concerns about the safety of their children by organising a bus run to and from the school where community activities were taking place.

Each situation will call for different responses to accessibility depending on the nature of the project. If they are not picked up at the planning stage there must be mechanisms that will identify problems in take up once the project starts. Some questions that Good Practice projects have had asked themselves about accessibility include:

- *What expenses do volunteers need so that they do not drop out? Lunch, travel, childcare?*
- *How can we encourage more women to use our services? Providing a crèche, ensuring advice/training sessions do not coincide with leaving and picking children up from school?*

- *How do we go about engaging with older refugees? Home visiting service, visiting local luncheon club as an outreach venue?*

Case Study – Retaining Users

RETAS and its partner organisation **Islington African Partnership** have learned from experience the value of making projects accessible and welcoming to service users.

They worried that for one year projects, such as their ERF funded programme of training courses, it would be difficult to make refugees aware of their new courses, and even if they did attract them, that they would not stay.

They therefore set out the following strategy:

- They developed publicity material as soon as an announcement of funding was made. They knew that any initial delay would seriously cut into a one year project. Publicity was translated into appropriate formats. Provision in the funding application for translation when attracting a new client group was fundamental to its success.
- They agreed subsidised advertisement rates in local free newspapers, especially language specific periodicals. Adverts for the project's services were also placed in local health directories and hospitals were contacted to promote opportunities to staff.
- Organisations in the area that work closely with refugee groups (in this case, the local Voluntary Service Council) were briefed on the details of the project, allowing them to disseminate the news to a wider and appropriate audience.
- They held open days combining different projects being operated by both organisations.

An impressive retention rate of 18 refugees out of the 20 who originally began the Business Start Up and ESOL courses indicates that they are getting things right.

This promotional activity immediately generated the interest that under other circumstances might take six months to achieve. The fact that both organisations had the track record, the contacts and the systems to put this strategy in place helped. However, smaller organisations should certainly consider an appropriate marketing strategy as part of their planning, particularly building relationships with organisations that could act as referral points.

Retaining the beneficiaries, once they had been assessed and approved for the project was equally well thought out:

- Each applicant was issued with an induction pack to provide a resource throughout the project. It contained attractively presented information on:
 - who RETAS and Islington African Project were
 - what they did
 - who the tutors were and what their qualifications were
 - their entitlements and responsibilities as beneficiaries
 - childcare and a list of registered child minders
 - equal opportunities policies.

- The partners also cleverly combined funding from the Home Office with locally available funds under Neighbourhood Renewal and Sure Start streams to support applicants' travel and childminding expenses. Previous projects had also subsidised lunches. Staff were certain that inability to pay for these two items represented the two principal reasons for fall out.

- For RETAS in particular, it is vital that refugees' first impression of the course be a good one. This was confirmed by one satisfied course graduate:

“When you are a refugee you have all sorts of concerns such as – what will happen to my benefit if I have to go on this course? How will I cope as a single parent in being able to cope with the pressures? However, everything was done to reassure me and make me feel welcome. We were part of a large group which gave us all confidence. We were encouraged by the tutor to discuss the goals we had. This was very inspiring. I felt immediately relaxed and was led to believe that I was capable of accomplishing things. No question was left unanswered. It also helped

that the tutor spoke a number of the languages used by my colleagues. They responded well to this.”

Some organisations are reluctant to include a budget for these kinds of items. They shouldn't be. Funders increasingly monitor applications to identify guarantees for equality of opportunity. The Challenge Fund and ERF, mindful of the difficulties that refugees often experience in remaining engaged with services, are two funding streams that have traditionally prioritised expenditure on items that attract and retain service users.

Making it Public and Making it Easy - Checklist

- **Avoid delays in attracting service users by immediately promoting what you intend to do.**
- **Be imaginative in the ways you communicate with service users, referring organisations and the local media. In addition to traditional leaflets, consider relationships with community newspapers, videos and links with partner organisations.**
- **Never lose an opportunity to promote your services to new audiences and have material that you can easily reproduce and disseminate.**
- **Consider your service users, consider their problems and consider how these might prevent them from benefiting from your services. Remember – your Equal Opportunities Policy is not just a piece of paper.**
- **Take steps to make it easier for volunteers and service users to access, and continue to access, your services. Consider expenses, interpretation/translation, induction packs, timings of services, and type of services such as outreach, women only sessions.**
- **Ensure your fundraising applications include publicity and marketing expenses as well as guaranteeing equality of access to your services.**

Chapter 3 - Making Friends

Our research and evaluation of all ERF and Challenge Fund funded projects since 2001 has indicated that chances of success are greater for those who work in partnership with others. This has led directly to a change in the ERF funding criteria, which now favours projects that can demonstrate partnership working.

The Good Practice Projects were unanimous in their support of partnership working. In their eyes, it provided:

- additional resources and expertise that directly benefited service users
- fresh ideas and perspectives
- input on how similar organisations have dealt with similar problems
- wider publicity for the project and effective referral points
- opportunities for staff development and improved morale.

It is no coincidence that the Good Practice projects have all to greater or lesser degrees made effective use of partnerships. But how have they made these relationships work without becoming “talking shops”? How have they selected their partners? How can conflict be prevented?

Make Partnerships Work for the Project – not vice versa

Case Study – Selecting Partners

Some of the answers to the questions posed above are provided by looking at what has accomplished as part of their project,

The **Evelyn Oldfield Unit’s** Challenge Fund project, designed to develop the skills of refugee community advocates/project workers, has benefited from a general annual review of partnerships. The Project Coordinator states that, for them, it is vital to let partnerships evolve, and that they constantly re-assess their partnerships to ensure they remain relevant for their service users and the work being undertaken.

As part of the review, staff organised a session where they mapped all the organisations they currently worked with indicating what they did, who their client groups were and what

future work was likely to give rise to opportunities for partnership. The Coordinator remarked,

“We found that the Unit does not have strong links with local authorities. However, much of our future work will involve local authorities and the mapping exercise enabled us to brainstorm ideas and address how we were going to create these new partnerships and links with council officers.”

They were able to highlight the specific value that each partner organisation brought to the work. They were also able to identify situations where it was no longer appropriate to work with certain organisations – where, for example, the reason the partnership had originally formed no longer applied.

By being rigorous in selection of partners and unsentimental about ending relationships that no longer served the interests of their users, the Unit used their time to maximum effect – investing resources to make progress effective and efficient rather than aimlessly networking without having any idea why.

Partnerships – Getting the Structure Right

The nature and structure of partnerships naturally differed. Some project partnerships were straightforward referral arrangements with an occasional meeting to exchange good practice and information. Others are more formal and can involve a steering group or a close working relationship such as that between **RETAS** and Islington African Partnership on one hand, and **Community Integration Partnership**, Roselodge Group and the West Midlands Consortium for Asylum and Refugee Support on the other.

Diversity of backgrounds makes for an interesting mix of ideas:

“I think it makes our project unique working with local government and a private organisation that is committed to this project.....it’s interesting having two different points of view on the services that we are providing.....it has helped in our success as the viewpoints may be the same but the ways of doing things and implementing them are different.”

In order to accommodate different standpoints and ways of doing things all partners, according to Community Integration Partnership, must have respect for each other. They

must also share common goals and it helps if processes are put in place to regulate how the partnership works.

Also stressed by projects was the need for adequate feedback and consultation. If communication systems start to break down the effectiveness of the partnership suffers. Some projects that had formed steering groups found that short agendas and progress reports focused discussions and prevented unnecessary and time-wasting debate.

They also made it clear that in order to get meaningful participation from partners it was important from the outset to know exactly what the role of each partner was.

For example, is a partner involved primarily because they are responsible for delivering part of the service themselves? Or do they provide some specialist knowledge? Once roles were defined it became much easier to accommodate partners and maximise the value of their contribution.

One example of this was **Cardiff County Council's and SOVA's Refugee Housing Advice Project**. One of the key strengths was identified by the research was successful development of an effective relationship with Cardiff Bond Board, which provided bond guarantees or financial benefits for refugees on low incomes to enable them to gain access to accommodation in the private rented sector. The Cardiff Bond Board now play a central role in the project's service delivery. The Rent in Advance and Bond Scheme set up by the project and the Bond Board has made a huge impact on the success of the project and has played a vital part in securing private tenancies for refugees. The experience and knowledge held by the Bond Board is frequently drawn upon by the project and vice versa:

"We're always ringing each other for advice."

Making Friends – Checklist

- **Before a funding application is submitted decide whether it is appropriate to involve partner organisations, given the nature of the services you intend delivering. It may NOT be appropriate.**
- **Decide what input you need from partners and then select them according to these criteria. Be selective, be sure they can deliver what you want and be sure they share the same goals.**

- **Define their roles.**
- **Choose the type of partnership structure the project needs. Does it need a steering group? Whatever the structure consider how this is going to be managed. Does it need a written process?**
- **Ensure good and simple communication systems and keep partners updated on the progress of the project.**

Chapter 4 - Making it Happen

As noted earlier in *Making it Public and Easy*, one of the problems encountered by some Challenge Fund and European Refugee Fund projects in recent years was set-up delay. To an extent this is inevitable. Staff need to be recruited, steering groups must be formed and it takes time for people to hear that the services are available and to start accessing them.

Getting Familiar with Project Management

Those Good Practice Projects that succeeded in avoiding unnecessary delay and generally keeping projects on track developed a number of tools to assist them in the task. Some workers spoke of the value of using part of their training budget on courses in project management. With so much more work now relying on contracts and specific time limited projects instead of annual core funding, there is a real need for staff to be aware of basic project management principles.

One big advantage they reported was learning to identify when activities were taking longer than originally intended, and how to take action to address the delay. For example, if a project plan identified delays to certain outcomes or outputs expected at a certain stage, staff were able to identify the reason and rectify things.

The tools that were used gave staff greater confidence and a feeling of being in control.

The **Women's Business Development Agency**, for example, has created a range of project implementation models they have built upon as their experience of working on projects has grown. These models are applied and tailored to individual projects. Learning which types of models work and which do not comes from having sound monitoring and evaluation systems and retaining good staff communication throughout testing periods. As a minimum, project models should outline tasks, staff resourcing, start and end dates for each stage of the project and required outputs and outcomes. Some plans will also include milestones, indicating what should be in place at specific dates throughout the project.

By monitoring progress against the project plan, staff were able to address issues before they became detrimental to service delivery. As the project coordinator said:

“We have a standard approach to implementing projects in terms of methodologies and the way they are shaped ... all we do is adapt the design according to the needs of the client group, so for example we’ll change training materials or maybe the way we market the project...”

Operating Systems – the Value of Procedures

Projects have found that operating with consistent policies and procedures has contributed to efficiency and effectiveness. A number of the Good Practice Projects have implemented recognised quality systems and are now accredited. This has sometimes involved simply adopting procedures for the project that are already followed in other parts of the organisation. Others have had to design new procedures as appropriate.

Projects generally agreed that policies and procedures had given their services more consistency and staff greater clarity, reducing wasted time and resources.

Evelyn Oldfield Unit’s Project Coordinator explains:

“Everything is documented here! For example, we run a number of training programmes. All of the user and tutor feedback reports on training sessions are documented. This was incredibly useful for me when I started as I could go back to previous courses, some going back five years, and find what people had said about the tutors, who has what skills, whether the group size was right, the content etc. Using these existing resources and systems saved me a lot of time.”

Procedures that projects found most useful, dependent on the type of project they were running, included:

- statistical monitoring
- recruitment and selection of staff
- communication – e.g. team meetings, staff supervision
- course booking and timetabling
- user feedback
- referrals.

Occasionally, where problems that impede progress arise externally, staff need to think imaginatively about how these problems can be overcome.

For **Cardiff County Council**, as soon as the project started, demand for its services soared and staff were working at full capacity. In order to alleviate pressure, staff worked together to identify areas of concern and devised plans to address them. For example, one of the key barriers to the success of the project was backlog in housing benefit claims. To address this, the project worker states:

“We’ve developed a system where I complete all the benefit forms with the service user and compile all the necessary paperwork. I then liaise directly with the team leader at the Housing Benefit Office. We’ve got a good rapport now...I also use disclosure of information forms which gives me access to enquire on the progress of the application and be made aware of any problems that might arise. This means that I can liaise with the landlord and provide an update if there has been a delay in rent and also [liaise] with the service user if more information is needed. This has been a real selling point to private landlords!”

Although such arrangements are probably easier to set up when one of the partners to the project is the Council, it nevertheless demonstrates what is possible with a bit of thought and partnership working. It is not in the best interests of clients for project staff to be content to do nothing in the face of incompetence and delay on the part of external agencies.

Projects need systems and agreed working practices to deliver efficiency and effectiveness. Working out how a project will be managed is the biggest challenge that most organisations face but when they get it right the users are the beneficiaries. Organisations underestimate management processes at their peril, whether it be staff supervision, communication with partners or monitoring and evaluation.

Making it Happen – Checklist

- **Identify the policies and procedures needed by the project to maximise efficiency and effectiveness and reduce wasted effort. Which ones can be borrowed from the host organisation and which will need to be developed from scratch?**
- **Consider whether to apply for an accredited quality assurance system – e.g. Investors in People, Legal Services Commission Quality Mark. This**

might provide a framework that will help you build your policies and procedures.

- Attend a basic project management course and adapt tools and materials to keep control of projects.
- Always prepare a project plan that sets out tasks, staff responsibilities, required outputs and outcomes and dates (or milestones) by which certain things ought to have happened.
- Think imaginatively about how external problems can be overcome so as not to interfere with the progress of the project.

Chapter 5 - Making it Better

It has been a high priority for the Home Office since the introduction of the Challenge Fund and ERF for projects to report their experiences of what worked well and what could have been improved (with the benefit of hindsight).

Significant support was given to projects to introduce self-evaluation systems to answer such questions as:

- Are you reaching the right people?
- Are you doing the right things in the right way?
- Do you have sufficient resources to provide the services you want to and are you achieving as much with your resources as possible?
- Is the project making real differences to the lives of your service users?

The Home Office has hoped that by obtaining evidence on these and other questions, projects would be able to make improvements to services and become more accessible, relevant, efficient and effective.

How Good Practice projects undertook the task of evaluation differed from project to project. Whatever methods were used, staff all agreed that analysing statistics and obtaining feedback from their users was time well spent and offered numerous benefits beyond improving their services. Benefits included the development of new courses (RETAS), more management committee recruits (Day-Mer), and an increased role in influencing local policy (Asphaleia Project and Evelyn Oldfield Unit).

Quantitative and Qualitative

Evelyn Oldfield Unit and **RETAS** strongly encourage the use of appropriate monitoring systems to identify the type of user accessing the service. They say that this information is vital in feeding their plans and informing future funding applications.

Statistical information revealed for them which courses/events were the most popular, what types of problems people presented to project workers, which part of the city most users came from and how successful services had been (e.g. the number of refugees successfully re-housed).

Quantitative, statistical information alone will not tell the whole story, however. All the projects, to varying degrees, sought the views of their users on service received. Many also sought qualitative, in-depth information on perceptions of services.

As a result of such qualitative research monitoring user feedback and evaluation forms, the **Evelyn Oldfield Unit** discovered that many coordinators in refugee community organisations would like and benefit from a greater understanding of the workings of government and how to create partnerships with other external agencies. To meet this need, the Unit developed 'The Gateway Programme' offering coordinators an induction to their Local Authority and frontline services.

To pilot the idea and explore the benefits to both the refugee community and the Local Authority, the Unit has been working in partnership with the London Borough of Islington. A forum was organised so that refugee community organisations and the Local Authority could come together and discuss emerging issues and ways forward, and monitor the success of the pilot idea. The Gateway event acted as a "broker" between the Local Authority and the refugee community. The Programme Co-ordinator states:

"The Gateway Programme is not the answer to better relations between local governments and their communities but it is a possible 'key' to unlocking the potential of pro-active partnerships."

If the pilot proves successful the Unit will replicate the idea in other areas and contexts.

Giving Users a Voice

Staff at **RETAS** learned from undertaking evaluations of their courses and listening to user feedback what delivery methods work with different groups. For example, they found that to maintain interest courses should not be too long and should be a mixture of tutor led presentations, group work and exercises. They invited participants to assess and discuss their own performance with tutors. The project staff feel that these features significantly contribute to the development of services. They give participants a sense of commitment to the project as well as a sense of ownership, because they know that what they say influences practice.

The Good Practice projects used imagination in getting opinions from users. They organised focus groups and encouraged users to speak freely about their experiences. They identified

questions organisations wanted answered and facilitated discussion. Short evaluation forms and one-to-one interviews were also used.

The value of obtaining the views of service users is also fully recognised by staff at the **Asphaleia Project**. It is not an easy task. To ensure that the opinions of a supposedly “hard-to-reach” client group (young refugees) are captured and used to improve the overall service, they too have applied imagination.

As traditional methods such as questionnaires and structured interviews could appear intrusive for vulnerable teenagers, they have experimented with more innovative solutions. Acutely aware of reacting to informal feedback given outside the scope of a formal process, staff maintain a day diary to record quotes and opinions. These are then fed back through standing items on team meeting agendas, and managers consider how best to incorporate these views in future practice.

Another successful feedback method has been the use of cards originally introduced to enable service users to their feelings and aspirations. Each card prompted discussion around a subject that was difficult to articulate for the refugee. What arose from these discussions then informed development plans. The cards were adapted to the task of obtaining feedback and have provided the organisation with information that has influenced future projects for the better.

The involvement of young people on steering groups is also a significant success. Staff were conscious of the need to avoid tokenism and did not wish to put the young people into situations that would undermine their confidence. After pioneering the initiative, they recommended the following steps:

- Ensure staff proactively identify service users who would be most suited to the responsibility and tasks. Are they assertive, thoughtful and knowledgeable about the work of the organisation?
- Consider service users who no longer benefit directly from the service. Some people may think that they have to accept an invitation to be on a steering group as a condition before receiving further help. Remember, someone who has been through the service from one end to the other is likely to have a perspective (and distance) not shared by current users.

- Assess the requirements of the post and what will be expected. Does it involve tasks and responsibilities that, even with support, the young person is going to find difficult to undertake? If so, consider whether he or she can be involved in some other, more appropriate, way.
- Provide comprehensive support to the user once s/he begins to assume his/her responsibilities,. Consider designating a support worker/mentor.

The success of the approach is demonstrated by one former service user. She was given the opportunity of sitting on a social services panel on fostering. Inspired by the experience, she has now qualified as a nursing assistant at the local hospital and intends to pursue a degree in nursing next year at Brighton University. Staff say that her contributions to the work of the project have been priceless.

Making it Better – Checklist

- **Identify the information you wish to capture. It will relate directly to the aims, objectives, outputs and outcomes you have defined – in other words, the things you need to measure.**
- **Decide which methods, both quantitative and qualitative, are most appropriate, given the nature of your users.**
- **Invest time in asking for user feedback.**
- **As a team, analyse what the information is telling you about the users, the services and the changes that need to be made.**
- **Assess how best these changes should be implemented and continue to monitor the difference they make.**

Chapter 6 - Making it Last

The Challenge Fund and ERF are designed to provide projects with support through their first important year. After that the projects themselves will be expected to secure funds from elsewhere to continue providing the services they have developed. It is the exception for projects to be funded beyond the first year and generally this happens only in cases where there are clear innovative developments to the original project.

Given the short-term nature of the funding, organisations must think very early about how their projects are to become sustainable.

Making Services Indispensable

The approach to be taken will vary from area to area. The **Asphaleia Project's** ERF funded work is based in West Sussex, a part of the country that has not traditionally attracted significant numbers of refugees. Consequently, the organisation has been able through the project to become widely regarded as experts in the field. They have received invitations to inform policy at both local and regional levels. Staff, for example, sit as consultants on an initiative by the library service to stock its libraries with culturally appropriate material for the benefit of refugees. Through a series of initiatives which have led directly from the ERF funded project they have succeeded in making themselves indispensable to local policy makers and funders and, as a direct result of this profile, the organisation has secured funds from the Learning and Skills Council to provide services to Social Services Departments as well as to provide job training. This has meant an increase of two members of staff and six part-time trainers.

In particular, Asphaleia has specifically tailored and marketed the activities they undertook as part of the ERF funded project as a package of support to Social Services. They produced assessments of academic ability on individual refugee youngsters with accompanying reports. As this service assists social workers with the discharge of their statutory responsibilities and because they can purchase it more economically than they can generate it, they have offered Asphaleia a long-term source of finance that is not dependent upon time-limited funding.

To ensure sustainability for a project, staff recommend:

- early development of a strategy for sustainability: an exit strategy that identifies who the likely future funders are, what evidence they will need to assess the project and who needs to do what at which time to give the project its best chance of continuation
- development of this strategy long before current funding is due to end - preferably at the same time the funding application is being prepared
- informing influential partners of the work and involving them in its delivery, ensuring friends who will support future funding applications
- publicising your achievements and making yourselves needed.

Case Study

A key message that emerged from research with the Asphaleia project was confirmed by the experience of the **Princes Trust in Scotland**. The best means of securing further funding is to demonstrate that your idea works!

As noted earlier, the project is targeted at 14 – 18 year olds in the Sighthill area of Glasgow. It brings together young people living in the district once a week for various activities – art and health workshops, DJ-ing, music (guitars and keyboards) and football. About 50 to 60 young people from the refugee and asylum seeker and host communities attend each week.

Sighthill has experienced difficulties in housing asylum seekers and refugees in this area. These difficulties included attacks, violence and one murder. The high profile given to successful integration of refugees in the city meant that the project could, if it worked, provide a model for policy makers to replicate in other areas.

The project succeeded on many fronts. It identified areas of common interest and promoted them to change the perceptions of young people from the host community about young people from refugee and asylum seeker communities. All the activities have a “youth flavour” with desk-mixing, gritty artwork (e.g. for CD covers) and hip hop dance. The comments of staff show what was achieved in a relatively short period of time.

“At the start everyone was in cliques, now all are mixing and talking to each other.”

“When it started off it was like West Side Story with ten white faces at one end of the hall and 40 or 50 black or brown faces at the other end of the hall and they walked about in

tribes. Within three or four weeks, one or two brave souls were starting to talk to each other and now [you] would never know there was an issue.”

“We don’t need to police so much, young people respond and say that ‘you can’t say Paki.’ They’re self-regulating the behaviour.”

“Seeing more challenging indigenous youngsters being here (at the project) and part of it is surprising as they were the ones knocking lumps out of the refugees and asylum seekers.”
(Head teacher of local school where activities take place)

The model for the entire project is now being looked at by a range of policy makers interested in engaging young people on crime reduction initiatives. In particular they hope to tackle issues such as territoriality and serious assaults. The success of the project makes the likelihood of re-funding greater because funders can be shown its “cutting edge” potential and the possibility of future innovations that can be replicated elsewhere.

Incorporating Learning

A disappointing aspect of many recent applications submitted to the Home Office under both funding streams is that projects seeking renewal funding place so little emphasis on what they learned from the pilot or the first year, and how that learning will be used to develop the project further.

Funders are much more likely to fund projects that not only present a compelling case on paper but have also undertaken a small scale pilot that has shown the potential for success. Proving the value of an approach or model in an application counts heavily in its favour.

Making it Last – Checklist

- **Identify whether re-funding is needed at all. Has the project run its course? Can the services be sustained in other ways without further funding?**
- **If not, develop an exit strategy as soon as possible. Update it as the project progresses.**

- **Involve partner organisations and other supporters throughout the project so that independent voices are heard saying how good services are.**
- **Make the project indispensable to the local area. Communicate achievements to the council and show the project will be able to meet their needs. Package and market your services to organisations who will become indefinite funders.**
- **Incorporate learning from your pilot and say how it will be made better with additional funding. Communicate achievements.**

Chapter 7 - Making a Splash

Organisations often overlook the powerful effects of their own publicity. Not only can publicity increase their credibility and reputation but it can challenge the stereotypes attached to their users. Publicity can also reinforce the useful impression that projects are indispensable.

Several Good Practice Projects have wasted no opportunity to bring their successes to the notice of the media, funders, other organisations and potential users. Others have worked in quieter but no less effective ways to influence public policy through their proven achievements.

The **Community Integration Partnership** advertises their project and its successes by publishing a regular newsletter that has a wide circulation amongst key stakeholders. It provides an opportunity to promote the project's activities and events and to share experiences and successes. The project retains all its letters of support and thanks so that they can quote from them later. They are active in inviting local politicians and MPs to the project to observe the work that they do.

Women's Business Development Agency in Plymouth, too, has learned the value of creating a good public profile. Their project manager has said:

"We share what we do; we go to seminars, conferences and deliver workshops. We are now in a position where we are asked to share our expertise, we have awards for the work that we do and have been awarded flagship status by PROWESS, the national women's enterprise support trade association. Advertising and promoting these achievements through press releases, conferences and workshops gives us credibility and contributes to our reputation. This has been key to our success."

By exploiting links at a strategic level, the **Princes Trust in Scotland** have been able to work with other key agencies responsible for looking at youth policy. They have publicised the strategy that they have pursued in Glasgow in the hope that its success will be replicated in other contexts. This is an example of how demonstrating achievement and building credibility do not always have to be part of a wide publicity and promotional campaign involving the media.

A further example comes from **Day-Mer**'s educational support services scheme, which has made a real impact in local schools and gained a strong reputation within Hackney Council as a result. Promoting what they have done to the Council and involving service users in that promotion has helped the Local Authority recognise the continuing worth of what they do.

Naturally, promotional/publicity campaigns can generate wide interest. Those projects that did become involved with the media agreed that the stories were sympathetically received and served to challenge myths that are all too easily applied to their users.

Summarising advice from the projects, the key messages for media campaigns are:

- Always select local newspapers/media outlets that you feel are going to be sympathetic and, if possible, build on existing relationships.
- Try to remain in control of stories that you want them to cover. Write press releases and always monitor interviews with clients whom you choose as being relevant to the story.
- Ensure that users who are featured are properly briefed beforehand on the kinds of things they will be asked and how to deal with them.

Making a Splash – Checklist

- **Consider how your project's achievements can be brought to a wider audience and what others might learn from your experiences. Who should hear about your achievements? Will that benefit service users and the organisation?**
- **Exploit opportunities that will help you change policy and practice at local or national level by reporting on the success the project has enjoyed.**
- **Be careful with the media – keep control of the message you want to communicate. If possible, attend an introductory course in working with the media.**

Note: If you are interested in reading further material that has been prepared by Michael Bell Associates, refer to their website at www.mba4consultancy.co.uk where you will find guidance on completion of the “Self Evaluation Report”, submitted each year by Challenge Fund and ERF projects to identify their learning and the methods they have used to obtain information.