

BREAKING BOUNDARIES

Case Study: Facilitating Partnership Development City Leadership Forums (July 2022), Birmingham and Manchester

Detail of the Activity

This case study provides useful insight into how by actively facilitating community organisations to come together can create opportunities for new delivery partnerships to be formed. It illustrates how through facilitation work, Breaking Boundaries City teams can enable other organisations to work together, often with new organisations, to identify joint working opportunities and shared agendas on common cohesion issues to support deliver through the programme.

Activity Development and Delivery

City leadership forums were undertaken in all of Breaking Boundaries cities to support the restart of the programme. Events held in Birmingham and Manchester were particularly well attended and were highlighted in partner interviews as the catalyst for activity by the programme being driven forward. They also highlighted examples of where new partnerships were built because of the events that had led to specific activities being added to implementation plans.

How Breaking Boundaries Helped

The link up of organisations has been facilitated through Breaking Boundaries staging the forums with the best examples involving the active facilitation and outreach work by Breaking Boundaries Community Coordinators to inform potential participants about the events but also to address any concerns/challenges organisations might have in attending or understanding of/working on local cohesion issues.

These organisations often do not have the time to arrange such events themselves and the Co-ordinators through proactive outreach can, with support of local cohesion teams and other local contacts find organisations to attend that might not have otherwise been involved. Once signed up, regular one to one

contact with the organisations helps to secure their attendance:

"I gained ideas from them...[other attending organisations]. It also gives you a little push and motivation as to why you do what you do and relights your fire as you realise there are others interested in what you do and what to draw on your expertise. Plus it helped with my own CPD." (Delivery Partner, Birmingham)

Notes from each city show that those leaders of organisations attending the forums seemed keen to talk to each other, recognised their work had a lot in common, and were eager to all share contact details at the end.

What Happened – Impacts on Cohesion

The forums have contributed significantly to improved partnership working bringing organisations together, sometimes for the first time, and facilitating sharing of skills between organisations. Specific detail on these cohesion impacts include:

- Improved Partnership Working:** The activities that resulted from the forums would not have happened without the organisations being brought together without Breaking Boundaries action:

“It comes from experimenting; every city is different...it helped us focus on hitting requirements to ensure it has cohesion impact because we started talking about the local issues that were being faced.”
(Project Lead, Birmingham)

It was also notable the initial establishment of contact to start the partnership building process was particularly facilitated by the face-to-face contact that was possible in the forums and that it needs to be actively facilitated and encouraged by Breaking Boundaries – some communities remain nervous around in-person meetings. This backs up findings from a case study on the Youth

Sport Bar in Barking and Dagenham with a Manchester lead noting:

“Meeting people face to face helps build the trust and focus on ways to work together to deliver, especially when we haven’t worked together before. That being facilitated by BB (Breaking Boundaries) helps that happen. We’re not always good at doing that ourselves.”
(Project Lead, Manchester)

Attendees at both sessions also highlighted how it helped them avoid duplicating existing provision so additional cohesion focussed activities were added rather than a whole new activity being created that offered a similar opportunity to something another partner was already offering. The sessions built connectedness between attending organisations

- Improved skills around social cohesion work** – this was noted occurring for both the delivery partner leads and the Coordinators. This was particularly identified as occurring around the opportunities the partnership working provided to share skill and expertise and seemed to work best where partners had a specific expertise for instance sports delivery v. community engagement or involvement specialisms:

“[At the forum]...I got to share what I did but listen to other people. When you get to share. The conversations that were going on before we even started was really valuable. It’s always difficult to bring people together because people have different timetables” **(Project Lead, Birmingham)**

Coordinators identified that they improved their understanding of the challenges in dealing with the community groups that their delivery partners had built up over time.

In Birmingham delivery by a local partners supported a targeted training session at the Forum around cohesion and guidelines for dialogue to help facilitate conversations throughout project delivery. By using a cohesion expert the session got leaders thinking about how to facilitate conversations between young people from different backgrounds. It was also a chance to reflect on conversations that they had been involved in and how these could be improved in future to lead to positive outcomes in the future.



The Future

Both Birmingham and Manchester have highlighted how the forums have helped cement their partnership development work that has then helped the development of activities they have highlighted on their implementation plans

Top Tips for Effective Delivery

- **Engage local partners based on their expertise and how they can develop other local partners**, developing a mixed partner profile with some expert in physical activity and some in cohesion related work is especially important in cohesion work. This allows activity delivery to be enhanced such that sport delivery can include more cohesion impacts, whilst existing cohesion work can incorporate more physical activity. Partnerships made in this way can then refine existing delivery rather than duplicating or creating new activities with the resource requirements that might be needed.
- **Proactive and ongoing engagement on a one to one basis helps ensure attendance at forums and other partnership events.** This helps to build trust in the value of Breaking Boundaries whilst also creating a forum where initial concerns about linking up with new organisations can be addressed. City teams can also collect insight into how partnership events can be best structured to facilitate the best quality partnership development work through them.

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