



Vodafone
UK
Foundation

Collaboration

**Working together
for a better future**





SAMARITANS

Shelter



Collaboration

Working together for a better future

From a total of 10 short-listed organisations, narrowed down to four finalists, The Vodafone UK Foundation granted Shelter £3M over three years; YouthNet and Samaritans both £1.5M.

The Foundation Charity Flagship Programme objectives (2004) were to:

- enable the delivery of projects that are sustainable and leave a legacy
- capture the value of partnership as well as of the individual projects
- provide a model for future working in partnership.

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01 Supporting young people – catalysing change

About this case study

The purpose of engaging in cross-sector* partnerships is usually to address problems in society that are unresolvable by any one sector – private, public, civil society – and by doing so to affect change. The partnering experience has a deep effect on the partners but the change or impact brought about through partnership invariably extends (and should do so) beyond the partners and their immediate target group or beneficiaries. Outcomes and learnings can also influence other partnerships, bring about change in policy or the 'enabling' (partnership-friendly) environment, the general public's perception and type of delivery for key services or solutions.

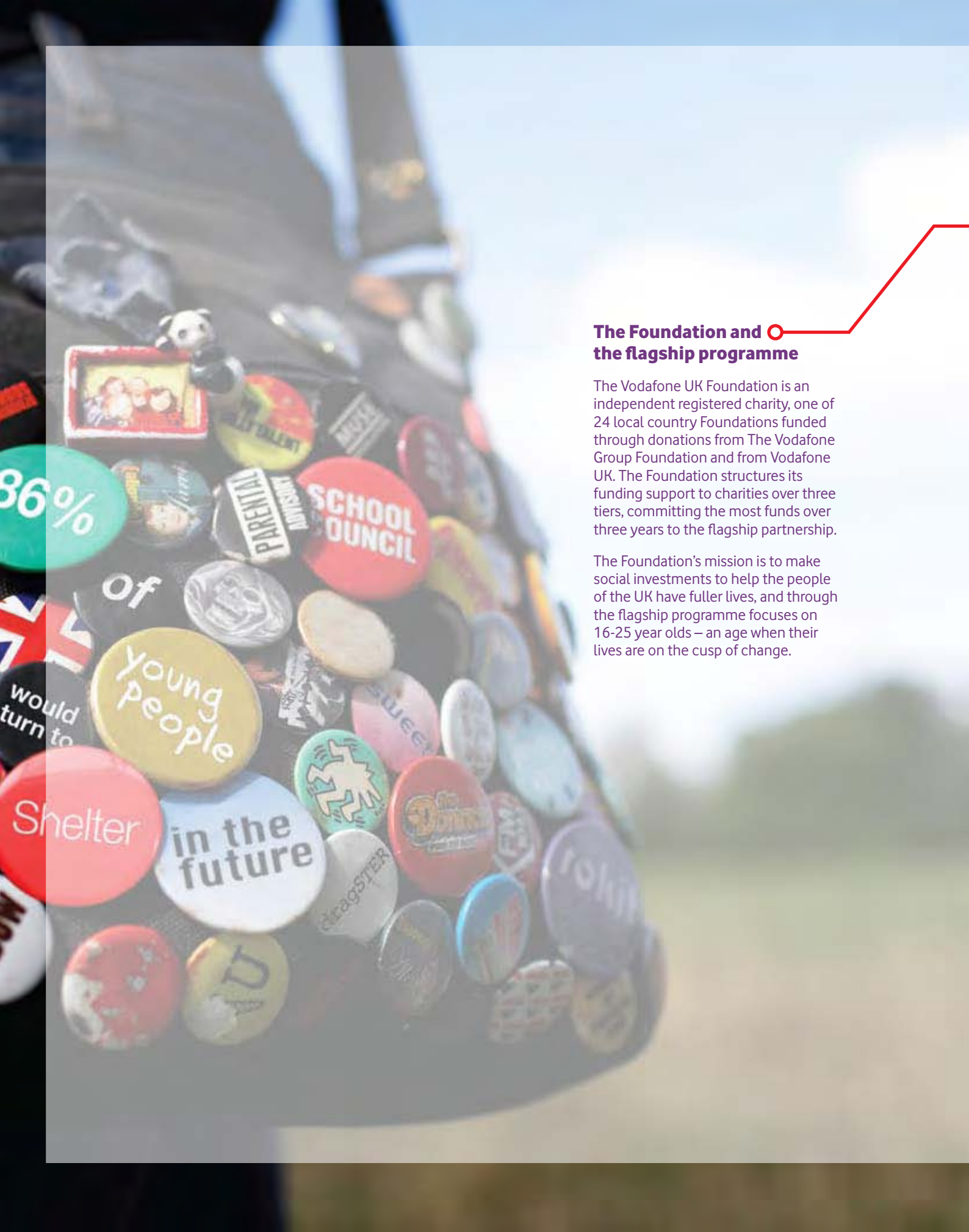
By capturing and recording the experience of partnering – the partnership story – a broader audience can be reached and therefore influenced. Each partnership is unique, but The Vodafone UK Foundation Flagship Charity Partnership is particularly so in that it involved a corporate foundation and three charities as well as a range of other organisations who 'dipped in and out' of the collaboration. The partnership itself was entered into with no pre-determined outcomes (other than the programmatic ones); the Foundation had decided to pioneer a new approach and was prepared to 'expect the unexpected'. All these factors make this partnership story most unusual.

The case study focuses on the three year flagship partnership funded by The Vodafone UK Foundation between three UK national charities: Samaritans, Shelter and YouthNet and should be of interest to NGOs, foundations and funders as they respond to a changing environment in which a partnership approach is increasingly seen as an effective mechanism for addressing development issues.

The approach and methodology used in the collection, collation and analysis of the information is based on the Partnering Initiative's Case Study Toolkit (2006) and as such is intended to be a learning case study. The observations and conclusions are those of the authors, synthesized from the views of the partners and other organisations supporting the partnership over the past four years and therefore should be read as a retrospective.

* cross sector partnership means two or more organisations from any of the following sectors – business, government, the not for profit /civil society, foundations, international agencies, academia – working collaboratively





The Foundation and the flagship programme

The Vodafone UK Foundation is an independent registered charity, one of 24 local country Foundations funded through donations from The Vodafone Group Foundation and from Vodafone UK. The Foundation structures its funding support to charities over three tiers, committing the most funds over three years to the flagship partnership.

The Foundation's mission is to make social investments to help the people of the UK have fuller lives, and through the flagship programme focuses on 16-25 year olds – an age when their lives are on the cusp of change.

Stronger together – about the partners

Samaritans

Samaritans is available 24 hours a day to provide confidential emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair including those which may lead to suicide. They are contacted every six seconds by phone, email, text, letter or people coming into their branches. The 50 year old organisation relies on over 16,500 volunteers to provide confidential emotional support to five million callers a year.

In applying to be the Foundation flagship charity partner the Samaritans hoped to make their service more relevant to young people, reaching them in more sustainable, innovative ways using technology in order to provide targeted emotional support.

Shelter

Shelter was set up in 1966 to prevent bad housing and homelessness by tackling the root causes of Britain's housing crisis. The organisation's vision is that everyone should have a home. Shelter is a campaigning organisation as well as a service provider, helping people find and keep a home. It has direct contact with over 170,000 individuals and families providing them with free, confidential, expert advice and housing support services.

In applying to become the Foundation flagship charity partner Shelter intended to close the gaps that young people can fall through by ensuring that information and advice is available more widely and earlier on in a young person's experience of homelessness or housing difficulty – communicated in a way and through a channel most suited to them.

YouthNet

YouthNet is an online charity – founded by broadcaster Martyn Lewis in 1995 – which exists to create a socially inclusive environment where all young adults are engaged, informed and inspired to achieve their ambitions and dreams. YouthNet supports young people through two award-winning websites: www.TheSite.org and www.do-it.org.uk. TheSite.org aims to be the first place all 16-25 year olds turn to when they need support and guidance in life.

Each month, over 500,000 young people visit TheSite.org for information, support and advice on all the key issues they face. In applying to become the Foundation flagship charity partner, YouthNet's aim was to develop askTheSite, a confidential and anonymous question and answer service for 16-25 year olds, and to develop the capacity to deliver this service through mobile phones (a 'first' for the voluntary sector).

Flagship programme selection criteria (2004)

Projects that:

- targeted 16-25 year olds
- had clear lasting, measurable impact on UK society (and on both direct and indirect beneficiaries)
- had resonance with the Foundation's mission
- fit the Foundation criteria (social investment objectives)
- were going to be sustainable
- delivered a key solution to the issue addressed
- provided opportunities for leverage of further support
- fit with the Foundation's culture
- provided an opportunity to leave a legacy.

Charity Flagship Partnership Programmes at a glance: Focusing on the 16-25 age group

Samaritans:

Goal

- 1 To make Samaritans more relevant, appropriate and accessible to young people thereby reducing the risk of suicide and self harm by young people.
- 2 Broadening the channels of support open to young people from telephone-based to email which required increasing the organisational capacity to provide email support and develop impactful marketing and awareness raising campaigns.

Key activities

- Extend the email service as a means of reaching 16-25 year olds by:
- conducting research to inform the awareness raising approach of Samaritans amongst young people, in particular their email service
 - delivering targeted emotional health messages through marketing campaigns (one per year)
 - increasing the use and reach of email service
 - fostering a sense of inclusion through volunteering opportunities, research and evaluation
 - training volunteers (11,000) in the use of email (in 90% of the branches).

Shelter:

Goal

- 1 Provide young people (aged 16-25) in the UK with improved access to responsive housing advice services by developing information and delivering advice using email, phone, internet technologies and off-line via printed and face-to-face.
- 2 Reduce the number of young people experiencing homelessness through targeted communications.
- 3 Implement a network of effective partnerships and initiatives to increase knowledge of the problems facing young people; improve the level of responsiveness and good practice information; provide advice and support.
- 4 Raise the issues of youth homelessness through policy and campaigning initiatives.

YouthNet:

Key activities

- A web portal Know Your Rights (KYR) specifically targeting young people.
- Online housing information and advice to support the young people's portal (over 1,300 pages of content covering 10 major sections of housing law in both England/Wales and Scotland).
- Young people in Northern Ireland also have access to the same service through www.housingadviceNI.org.uk a website developed in partnership with Housing Rights Service based in Belfast and hosted by Shelter.
- Advice by email service for young people in England and Scotland.
- A web portal, 'Advising Young People' targeting the professionals who work with vulnerable young people giving access to information, resources and training.
- Printed materials (information leaflets, guides on good practice in housing and homelessness services, tool kits, wall chart) for young people and professionals who work with them.
- Targeted marketing and communications activities for specific groups of young people and professionals to raise their awareness of the services.

Goal

- 1 To enable young people (aged 16-25) to make informed and intelligent life choices by establishing a national 'question & answer' service – askTheSite.
- 2 To develop the capacity to deliver this service via mobile telephones and to create the foundation for full multi-platform distribution.

Key activities

- Develop and launch TheSite.org on mobile phones, creating the UK's first mobile-based advice service for young people.
- Develop the capacity to deliver askTheSite services on mobile phones, putting advice and support right into the hands of young people.
- Form ground-breaking partnerships with advice-giving experts, increasing their reach, and positioning TheSite.org as the online one-stop-shop for young people.
- Create the largest searchable online archive of previously asked & answered questions, by young people, for young people.
- Develop and launch a peer volunteer programme, training young people to provide relationships advice to their peers.

Sounds easy?

Simple concept – Major impact

The Vodafone UK Foundation first began its cycle of selecting a three year flagship charity partner in 2001, and this second round started in 2003. The Foundation mirrors the values of the Vodafone business, having 'a passion for the world around us' and 'helping the people of the world have fuller lives both through the services we provide and the impact we have on the world around us' and striving for innovation by 'taking what exists today and keep pushing'.

The Foundation values – empathetic, enabling, inclusive, innovative, progressive – also extend to the types of programmes it supports.



Innovations

From the outset, this second round of the Foundation flagship charity partnership exhibited innovative and progressive (pushing boundaries) elements. Soon after choosing the new flagship charities, the Foundation, wanting to explicitly focus on value-added approaches, decided that this could be tried through the creation of a network of projects between which there would be some synergies. Furthermore, the Foundation itself was also going to be actively part of the collaboration.

However, with only a small team, the Foundation had to use resources effectively and efficiently. It did this by involving a few key external organisations to support the Foundation in assisting with time-intensive activities such as the selection process for the flagship programme (interviewing, shortlisting), partnership building activities, managing/coordinating meetings and action point follow up, and for specialist areas such as building partner capacity in programme evaluation and collating impacts.

Even prior to awarding the grant, the Foundation took a most unusual and innovative step by providing the short listed charities with funding and support to refine their pitch before presenting to the Foundation trustees. An external organisation helped the charities hone their pitch (not the programme content) and because it was an external player, it was neutral. Thus the competition was fierce but fair.

You've been selected as a charity partner but..!

After the final three charities were selected, the trustees believed that instead of a network of projects there would be more value in experimenting a partnership approach. They suggested that the three charities try to work together, to collaborate by finding synergies between the organisations which would at the same time leverage the Foundation grant...and so the experiment of collaboration began.

Creating a level playing field

'The core business of charities is not marketing, it is the programmatic work and so to ensure none were disadvantaged merely because one may be better at marketing than another, we provided the organisations with professional support for their presentations'

The Vodafone UK Foundation

Questions and assumptions

The call for collaboration was recommended, not mandated, but this nevertheless still put the charities under some pressure: none of their programmes had been designed with any input from, or role for, the others in mind. In addition, there were some assumptions that would have been helpful to examine and voice at this stage but the situation was too new. For example, the charities never questioned whether or not they had any option other than to partner, whereas the Foundation assumed (and feared) that they could exercise their right to refuse, especially as partnering was not a condition of the grant. Furthermore, the trustees themselves had not defined what was meant by forming a partnership and what would be expected of that partnership. However, through initial workshops the charities (including the Foundation) defined what areas of expertise and knowledge they could share and benefit from, set some ground rules for working together and also explored their concerns or challenges. Rather quickly they found common areas of interest, but how the partnership would actually work was an organic process that the charities had to work out over time.

Another assumption that would have been useful to voice in the early days was that Samaritans and YouthNet assumed that as Shelter had the higher award, it would be the 'lead' partner (although they were not sure what that might involve). As it turned out, there was no 'lead charity': it quickly became clear that they were in it together and as equals.

The charities also assumed that some of the support organisations (assisting with various components such as relationship building and other workshops, health checks) were part of the Foundation team and therefore represented the Foundation's views directly. As a result the charities did not question some of the processes or what they were being asked, which on a few occasions led to some misunderstandings. For example, the format of one of the presentations to the Foundation trustees was not one which the charities would have preferred but they didn't question it. As a result, the presentations didn't do justice to the programmes and the charities – united in protest – suggested that the trustees spend a few hours visiting each programme in order to truly appreciate the nature of the work that the Foundation was supporting. The outcome was that the charities bonded further around this issue and now the trustees have adopted this new practice of visiting each programme.

'While external organisations can play a useful role and be a good resource, it is important to keep two things in mind: their mandate and relationship to partners must be made clear to all and secondly, managing external organisations itself can be time consuming and tricky'

The Partnering Initiative

'I remember thinking at that first meeting: will they accept working in partnership?...and what if they don't?'

The Vodafone UK Foundation

'Excited, expectant, nervous and a bit anxious, committed, proud, wanting to get on with it, organisational logistics seemed daunting (of working in partnership), double-guessing why they and the others were chosen; sizing up the people and the programmes, slightly guarded...'

The range of feelings expressed by the charities at an early meeting to discuss partnership after learning of their award



Internal challenges

The challenges extended beyond the individuals around the table who were managing the partnership and programmes: there were significant internal challenges for some of the organisations. The partnership managers had to work hard to raise internal awareness and acceptance for the 'what, why and how' of the partnership.

Each charity faced its own internal challenges: Samaritans needed to 'sell' to their 15,000+ volunteers the proposed new methods to reach young people. Shelter tackled organisational change as internal teams needed to work cross-functionally to deliver the programme. YouthNet experienced delays in perfecting the technical aspects of its programme. This had an impact on the partnership building process. It took all parties, including the Foundation, some time to understand what the potential of the partnership element could be. It took a year before they felt the flagship relationship was a partnership.

In the first year the charities focused more on their funded programmes and less on the partnership. For some it was the first time they had received a grant from a corporate foundation and so the partnership managers had to 'educate' their organisations about how to work with the Foundation. For example, the individuals managing the Foundation relationship had to convince their team members that the Foundation valued learning and was in fact quite flexible, accepting that the charities needed to be able to adjust the programme development as required. The attitude that setbacks were ok especially when developing innovative and technically sophisticated approaches, was quite new to those organisations accustomed to rigid demands of grants reporting. Similarly, trying a partnering approach in this case was in essence an experiment – and not having pre-determined outcomes was the ultimate in allowing innovation and risk taking.

Therefore, internal communications to promote a clear understanding of the flagship programme within their own organisations was important. The Foundation also faced internal challenges because during this same period the Vodafone business was supporting another national charity through a cause-related marketing programme.

'A commitment (to partner) from the top (CEO) is critical: otherwise the partnership does not become strategic and it is unlikely to get the internal organisational resources it needs'

Reflection by Shelter on one of their success factors



Agreement

Most partnerships are governed by some form of agreement – more or less formal – to collaborate. Interestingly in this case this never happened and did not appear necessary. The charities agreed to collaborate, workshops were held to identify opportunities for sharing or collaboration and, by the second year, there was a clear shared sense of partnership and loyalty to the flagship programme – all achieved without any formal agreements between the charities!

As there were no set objectives for the partnership (unlike for the partners' programmes), it would have been difficult to have a formal agreement. However the partners all agree that more direction about what the partnership might focus on would have been useful.

For its part, the Foundation played an important role beyond merely funding: it actively fostered collaboration between the three charities and was itself an active partner – a pioneering step for a foundation. Stepping outside of a traditional donor role – perhaps made easier by the fact that it is a corporate foundation – Vodafone UK Foundation provided other forms of support to the flagship charities such as facilitating sharing of experience, expertise between the partners, mentoring, technical and other forms of knowledge transfer from Vodafone employees. Skills sharing exercises were proposed with an attempt at also engaging Vodafone employees to identify programme enhancements or spin offs of mutual value. The Foundation also assisted with profile raising/media, network development and provided other inputs.

Aiming for sustainability

A final innovative and most important objective of the programme came later, in the third year. The Foundation decided that to ensure sustainable outcomes of the partnership (beyond the funding period) it would offer to add financial support for the planning and implementation of a transition or exit process. Therefore a fourth year was added on specifically to concentrate on moving on and sustainability-focused activities.



02

Making it happen

Today, all three charities between them provide a comprehensive range of on-line support to young people aged 16-25.

However, one of the many important lessons that have emerged over the three year partnership is that one cannot assume that just because charities share the same target group or general focus of activities, that a partnership will naturally and easily follow.





Image: Luanr BBDO Advertising

Synergies of partnership working

- All the partners' projects focus on 16-25 year olds
- All provide access to information and opportunities
- All include the excluded
- All require technology input
- All see The Vodafone UK Foundation as a natural partner.

...no problem?

'It took time to realise that people were sharing and the world wasn't coming to an end'

Partnership manager recalls at the first meeting feelings about the sharing of information

...except Samaritans

- Awareness raising, not campaigning
- Tiered management structure
- High public awareness but perception is focus on suicide prevention
- Experience of email service to 'listen'
- Young people disassociate themselves from needing help.

Challenges:

- 203 branches, each independent and confederate style
- Branches run by volunteers (average age 40).

...except Shelter

- Campaigning
- High brand awareness but public perception is that it helps those sleeping on streets rather than bad housing issues
- Extensive experience in partnership working with delivery agencies
- Challenge to show young people how Shelter can help.

Challenges:

- Rapid expansion
- Rebranding which involved the launch of a new identity alongside a major national campaign – Million Children.

...except YouthNet

- Young, flat structure, cross functional
- Low public awareness
- Young people engage with them ('cool')
- Communications information technology driven
- Active partnership working is key to some projects, for example, on askTheSite, where YouthNet partners with leading advice organisations to deliver the service.

Challenges:

- 'Fast followers' of new technology.

...and The Vodafone UK Foundation

- 15 years old
- Corporate culture
- High public awareness of Vodafone brand but not of foundation
- Foundation funding – business needed for technical support.

Challenges:

- Potential conflict between the business case and social investment case for time spent on projects by Vodafone employees in environment of restructures.

¹YouthNet was working closely with both Shelter and Samaritans. The Samaritans were TheSite.org's 'help in a crisis' partner and Shelter had also collaborated on askTheSite.org when the Foundation collaboration was announced.

Step 1:

Information sharing

The charities emerged from a fiercely competitive activity (pitching for funds) to being required to partner with organisations they were for the most part only beginning to get to know – all three had already collaborated to some degree.¹ YouthNet spontaneously started the partnering process by sharing with their partners-to-be their experience of working with the Foundation (they had previously been the flagship charity 2001-2003). This was a significant gesture that helped break down barriers among the partners and began a process of sharing information that extended to Shelter learning about email services from Samaritans, YouthNet and Samaritans learning about on-line satisfaction surveys from Shelter, Shelter and YouthNet learning about brand awareness from Samaritans, and everyone learning about the potential of technology from YouthNet.

Step 2:

Finding the focus of the collaboration

There is no one universally accepted definition of what is a partnership; furthermore, partnerships all vary in degree and nature of collaboration. In this case the focus of the partnership was less on the programmatic goals (which were individual to each charity) and more on sharing and mutual support through learning. However, as a flagship programme, measurement of the programme achievements by each of the partners was consolidated. The charities worked with another supporting organisation, specialising in measurement, to decide how to develop measures and manage this aspect.



Step 3:

Support organisations

External organisations are like parents

An external support mechanism provides partners with support in a neutral space and with objectivity. As experts, they are able to apply specialist help on an 'as needed' basis, thereby conserving the resources (time and money) of the partners. However, they are most useful when their support leads to empowerment of the partners whose capacity is built up so they can continue the work on their own – like parents whose role changes over time – letting their children become independent and capable. It therefore needs to evolve to match the growing sophistication or competencies of the partners themselves.

The different supporting organisations were closely involved in the partnership initially, helping build the relationship. However the partners gradually ceased to rely so much on this support and so it declined proportionally as the partnership became stronger and the partners increasingly comfortable with each other. The one exception was in the area of measurement and evaluation which was needed on an on-going basis and therefore support continued to be provided from the specialist external organisation.

External agencies can be very useful, however their advantage – being external – can also be a disadvantage and there were moments when confusion occurred due to unclear communications or understanding of their scope or mandate. Therefore all partners need to ensure clarity about the mandate of the supporting organisations and what support they should/should not expect. In addition, there may be some activities that simply don't need to be or shouldn't be left to an external organisation, such as putting together presentations about the partnership and the programmes – these may provide everyone with a good opportunity for collaboration and better understanding about the partners' work. A further interesting point to note is that working with external organisations in this context involves a balancing act – the drivers for engagement are essentially different: the not for profits (driven by a social cause) are being supported by (for profit) consultancies (driven by business development).

'One true measure of a good rapport between partners is when they feel comfortable enough that there is no need for an external, third party to act as an advisor or sounding board'

The Partnering Initiative

Step 4:

Working together for leverage

Unlike non-corporate foundations, we could assume the Foundation was well placed to provide the charities with access to a range of non-pecuniary resources through the specialist functions of the business. But the charities did not partner with the Vodafone company so the normal assumptions of a company providing business services to their NGO partner organisations (in this case for example text promotions, airtime) was not guaranteed.

The Foundation arranged workshops with relevant Vodafone business functions, encouraging the charities to think creatively about the non-pecuniary resources they could access or leverage, for example Vodafone corporate contacts and suppliers. A Vodafone Business Change Manager was assigned to each individual charity as "mentor" and workshops were held on technology and marketing to 16-25 year olds. But this corporate engagement was not maintained beyond the first year. An important learning has been that, in order to maximise commitment and value from employee engagement, it is important to secure formal commitment from the company and the individual as to the extent of their contribution or engagement.

The Foundation also introduced the charities to the London Benchmarking Group for models and frameworks for reporting and sharing knowledge. These in particular were useful in showing the charities how to illustrate the value of their work which would be able to be applied to future fundraising efforts.

The charities benefited from leverage between each other, for example, one of the charities who had good support facilities for its marathon runners, offered to extend that support to another flagship partner. Other exchanges ranged from ideas for high level events to engaging celebrities and trouble shooting when things went wrong at the last minute. Other areas of exchange between the charities were email service expertise, SMS, crisis management plans, research – all of which resulted in cost savings to the partners by not having to 'reinvent the wheel' or do it themselves.

Corporate Foundations are hybrid creatures – not like other foundations and yet operating separately to the company. Such foundations need to be realistic and clear as to the level of integration between the two.

Over 100 Vodafone employees raised over £200K for Shelter's services in events such as London Marathon, Payroll Giving or other funding, including generosity in supplying prizes for events.

Potential areas of sharing knowledge and expertise as mapped out in 2004:

The Foundation also benefited from the exchanges: of great value to it was having a forum to talk about ideas – not just programmes – and gain knowledge about young people and their issues from organisations closer to this group. The Foundation has of course also continued to learn about partnering, using external support organisations, and about the charity/voluntary sector in general which will improve the way it designs and manages grants.

Samaritans

- volunteering
- training for volunteers
- integrated email advice service
- branding/marketing.

Shelter

- quality standards
- DPA expertise
- expertise on where info/advice/support is appropriate
- user testing
- policy and campaigning and profile raising (decision makers, local government, national government, media).

YouthNet

- project management
- multiple partners
- technical infrastructure
- programme design
- marketing
- communications to young people
- database management.



03

Making a difference

Components of Measurement & Reporting

Quarterly monthly written reports incorporating LBG methodology:

- key outputs, impacts, benefits
- significant variance from plan
- budget update
- publicity
- external liaison
- event/external activities
- project team and staffing changes
- actions, decisions required.



Making a difference – measuring impact

The purpose of combining measures was to account to the Foundation trustees on how the Foundation's investment was spent over the three years and to track performance against the original programme goals. A secondary purpose was to enable messages and – where appropriate – statistics to be selected for publicity to wider audiences, both for the Foundation (Vodafone managers, employees, media) and the partners (eg. future funders, government)

The indicators for measurement during the course of the flagship partnership were primarily quantitative although in the final three year report the charities were asked to analyse the following aspects:

- the main legacy for the programme together with unforeseen challenges, issues and achievements
- how achievements might still be further strengthened
- any issues that remained unaddressed
- the main learnings from the programme and how it built organisational capacity.

Measurement proved to be particularly challenging for the partners in several ways, the first being that the charities' programmes were quite different so it was not easy to find common measures of success. In terms of outputs, capacity, scope and reach, it was impossible to equate their achievements. It was also difficult to measure the services equally. The process also had to be carefully managed to avoid resuscitating the almost-eradicated-but-still-partly-underlying sense of competition between the flagship charities – vying for the Foundation's approval. Great care also had to be taken to ensure that the partners did not view it as a comparison exercise that left everyone feeling dissatisfied. However, this particularly thorny area also actually helped partners bond as they struggled to find the right evaluation and measurement processes.

'It's important to include in the programme budget the costs of measurement – this is a time consuming activity'

Shelter programme manager

'It's easy to feel that the other partners' relationship with the Foundation is better than your own'

Partnership manager

Over time, the charities recognised that although it was not possible to make direct comparisons – each one differs in size, brand recognition, organisational culture (although their programme delivery mechanisms are similar) – there was value in a combined system of measurement.

Unfortunately, beyond initial health checks of the current status of the partnership over the first year or two, the partnership did not fully develop measures for the partnering process and the outcomes of the partnership on their individual organisations. It may have been a good idea to set indicators and measure deeper organisational impact, but very few partnerships do this (or know how to). However the very process of creating this case study has provided an opportunity for the partners to reflect on the successes and the partnering impact on their organisations – and the very fact that there is a story to tell and write a case study about, is itself a measure of success!

Most importantly however, the process of designing measures and testing them out became a useful measurement tool for the charities, contributing to the overall management of not just this project but to other work that the charities were doing.





Making a difference – the role of individuals

Partnerships are about individual relationships. Among the many challenges to partnerships is personnel turnover. Most of the individuals who had been involved at the start of the flagship partnership had moved on within the first year. New partnership managers therefore had to quickly catch up: understand the dynamics, the partnerships processes, 'culture and values' and bond with the others – all of which took a little time. However the Foundation fortunately was able to provide some opportunities to allow space for informal interaction outside of the quarterly meetings.

Most importantly, the Foundation manager remained constant throughout the lifetime of the partnership and represented the 'glue' in the relationship. The added advantage of having an unchanging partnership manager is that that person becomes an important source of the partnership's history, a 'memory bank' and can further help with integrating new comers.

'A great part of the partnership's success is down to Sarah (The Vodafone UK Foundation) as an individual and what she has brought to the Foundation and the partnership: she is inspirational, committed and has carried people along with her'

Charity partner

A photograph showing a grassy area in the upper left and a paved path in the lower right. The shadows of two people are cast onto the path, suggesting they are walking away from the camera. The scene is brightly lit, likely by sunlight, creating sharp shadows.

Making a difference – to young people

'In an effective partnership there should be benefits on at least two levels: programmatic (ie addressing the issues, solving problems, improving services) and the organisational (for the partners themselves)'

The Partnering Initiative

On a programmatic level, all three projects were an irrefutable success and exceeded all expectations. The programmatic benefits targeted young people and through this partnership they are now better supported and served by the three charities and can directly access support through a wider range of channels. Less directly, young people can also benefit from the charities' increased understanding of the kinds of issues facing young people which results in a broader range of support solutions developed for them. This is because even though each charity delivered its own project, each has been able to share knowledge and resources, enriching their overall approach and offering to young people. All three charities were successful at meeting or surpassing the outputs and outcomes of their respective programmes.

Samaritans

Samaritans has extended its jo@samaritans.org national email service and successfully piloted SMS texting service to encourage its use by young people. Signposting on askTheSite increased questions to the Samaritans' site tenfold and there are now more young people contacting Samaritans by email (email referrals rose from year one (75 referrals) to 722 in year three from askthesite). To date over 485,266 e-mails have been received of which over 50% are from young people.

Findings from the website survey showed that the email service has extended the organisation's reach to more young people in distress and reduced distress amongst young people: 78% of 16-25 year olds felt that contact with Samaritans helped them take a decision not to end their own life, 65% felt it helped them to take a decision to not harm themselves and 78% felt it helped them to cope with the problem they were facing.

Shelter

Shelter's online housing advice service has already had over 10.5m page views (target was 3m by the second year) and has directly helped over 3,000 young people since the start of the project through the email service and the partnership with askTheSite.org. They estimate that around 400,000 young people have used the online information/advice and for services launched since September 2005 over 5,000 people (53%) have been informed by SMS that their email has been answered.

Two campaigns were run targeting 16-25 year olds and post communications evaluations have revealed that they were effective in motivating young people to seek advice. Although still in the early stages of evaluation research, results indicate that the programme has made a difference to the number of young people: they felt they got the information or support they needed, that they were able to take action themselves or felt more confident about their housing situation and how to avoid problems in the future.

YouthNet

Hundreds of thousands of young people have received anonymous, confidential and expert advice through YouthNet's website TheSite.org. Articles from TheSite.org, which provide factual information on the issues affecting young people, are now available on mobile phones, the UK's first mobile-based information and advice service for young people. As a result, support and advice is right in the hands of young people.

YouthNet has also formed partnerships with the UK's leading advice-giving experts² through askTheSite, thereby positioning the service as the online one-stop shop for young people in need of bespoke answers to their personal questions. Young people can search over 1,000 previously asked and answered questions in the askTheSite archive section, giving them instant support, advice and guidance. YouthNet has also launched a peer volunteer programme, training young people to provide relationships advice to peers – a method of advice provision that has increased the capacity and sustainability of askTheSite.

Over 500,000 unique users are visiting TheSite.org each month, with an average of 70,000 users accessing an archive of 1,100 questions and answers every month.

Making a difference – to partner organisations

‘Through this collaboration the organisation is now more confident about working in partnership in general, being better prepared by knowing the pitfalls and the process’

Samaritans

‘The partnership journey was more important than the end’

YouthNet
Development Director

‘The relationship with the flagship charities and the Foundation has allowed Shelter to explore and develop a major online initiative. The result of their support, advice and collaboration has resulted in an extremely strong service proposition, which is now core to Shelter’s online strategy. The legacy of this relationship has gone well beyond what anyone expected’

Adam Sampson,
Shelter CEO

One of the unusual and important aspects of this collaboration was that it **created a space** that further catalysed the three organisations into partnership with each other and paved the way for other partnerships. It also bolstered an existing relationship between Shelter and YouthNet who would not otherwise have been able to further develop their programme of work on askTheSite because of resource constraints.

The **experience gained** from this is an **important legacy**. Engaging in a successful partnership has raised the credibility of the charities in this area (ie they’ve done it) and opened up potential for further joint approaches. They have also learned how to partner more strategically and systematically.

For foundations, this innovative and pioneering approach represents a **breaking out of the traditional funder-donor role**: funding a partnership in order to capacity build the partner organisations and funding a **moving on** component to ensure sustainability. Finally the fact that the **Foundation’s role extended to also engaging as a partner** enabled them to leverage their funds for greater impact. This should give cause to other foundations and donors for serious reflection and new thinking around these issues.





Specific Partner impact

One of the most significant benefits of the partnership was that it enabled the charities to leverage the grant to strengthen their programmes and be well positioned to receive various sector specific awards which in turn raises their profile even more.

There were other charity-specific benefits for all three:

Samaritans

The partnership has enabled more effective signposting by Samaritans and has facilitated greater understanding and sharing of expertise. The programme has built organisational capacity within Samaritans to reach more young people experiencing emotional distress. For this, it was necessary to train 11,000 volunteers in email – now used in 90% of Samaritan's branches.

The marketing campaigns have given Samaritans a younger look/more modern face which appeals to younger volunteers who like to engage with technologies such as email and SMS. The project has increased diversity also by being able to recruit volunteers from the deaf community to answer emails. Following the three marketing campaigns, there has been a change in perceptions and awareness of Samaritans alongside a change in young people's attitudes towards emotional health. As a result, there has also been a shift in young people seeking help for a range of problems.

The organisation has also won several awards related to its awareness raising and marketing campaigns (animation, print, illustrations). Samaritans has also won a National e-WellBeing Award for delivering social, economic and environmental impact via ITC for sharing good practise and supporting voluntary and public organisations across the UK and overseas to develop their own email services.³

Shelter

The partnership has allowed the organisation to explore and develop a major on-line initiative which was integral to enabling a fundamental shift in service activity comprising web and e-commerce initiatives. For example, learning about online delivery from the other two charities, Shelter realised that through online delivery they can give effective support to many more people and as such online services can extend the scope of its delivery and complement the more intense face to face services needed by clients with more complex issues.

Continuing in the spirit of collaboration, Shelter has helped other organisations to offer their services using newer technologies and to introduce better services or adopt best practices. They have also provided training to representatives from 504 organisations related to young people. There have been over 3,000 downloads or purchases of their good practise material. Shelter has also delivered training in partnership with another charity, Youth Access.

A major achievement was that Shelter won the E-Gov Award for Excellence – the government's highest level commendation for the best e-Government services which through on-line delivery or IT implementation have positively transformed the lives of citizens, local communities, business and stakeholder groups.

YouthNet

The partnership has enabled YouthNet to create the UK's first mobile-based advice service for young people and has positioned the organisation to provide further support services for young people on a range of platforms (such as digital tv and games consoles).

Due to the partnerships formed during the flagship programme, YouthNet can provide bespoke expert advice, support and guidance to young people and support partner charities to build their own capacity, confidence and credibility. The programme has facilitated lasting, ground-breaking partnerships with the UK's advice giving experts, in particular Shelter and Samaritans.

Following the RESPECT? campaign, which gives young people a voice on the issues that they say affect them, more politicians, journalists and voluntary sector peers are aware of YouthNet's work. There is increased synergy between YouthNet's parliamentary contact and the media, and endorsements from the media and policy makers acknowledge the organisation's work.

YouthNet has also created a reporting tool to generate more detailed information on questions asked through askTheSite, gathering over 12 months of quantitative and qualitative data on the impact of askTheSite. As a result, the organisation is able to swiftly generate reports on questions asked on askTheSite through any combination of topic, gender, age, location, hours, days, months etc. In addition, YouthNet has a new demographic profiling tool to enable them to profile young people using TheSite.org on mobile and the fixed-line internet site.



04

Success factors and learnings

Fostering a good partnership

Clearly partnering is more fun if the individuals working together also enjoy being together and have opportunities to do so in a non-partnering context. The Foundation fostered a sense of partnership by inviting partners to in-house and external awards ceremonies and other events such as a day out at Epsom and Christmas celebrations which provided a more relaxed context for the partners to interact and get to know each other as individuals.

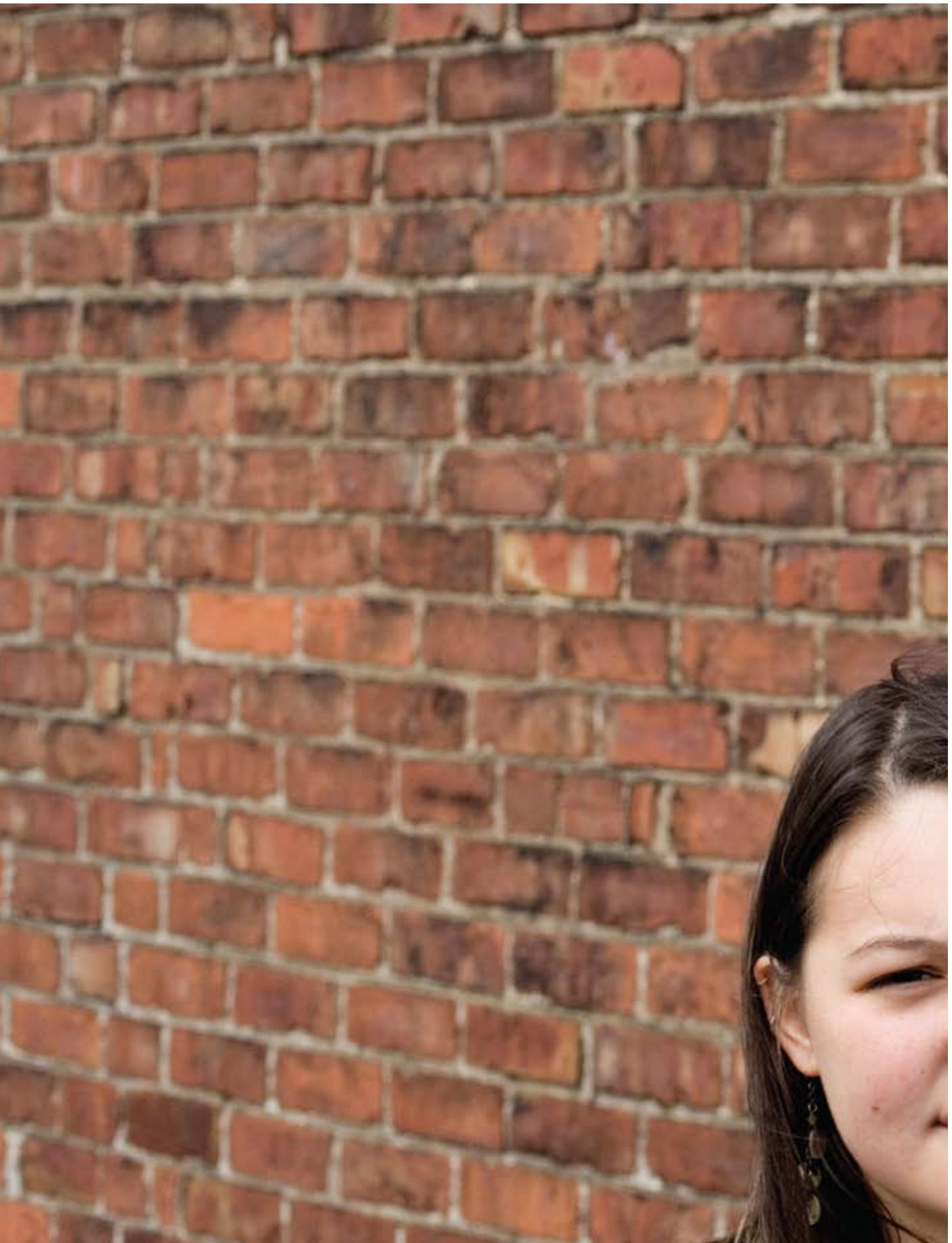
‘Partnership achievements can often only be seen in hindsight – case studies can reveal the unintended benefits/results of the partnership (not those that may have been planned in advance)’

The Partnering Initiative

‘Partnership needs ceremonial events to involve senior management and trustees’

Fiona Dawe, CEO YouthNet





The Foundation flagship partnership feature

General learning points

Partnering capacity & management

Regular core group meetings to keep the programme of work on track (particularly essential with so many organisations).

- It is important to ensure partners devote enough time (have separate meetings perhaps) to review the partnership relationship and not just the programmatic achievements – especially when the regular 'health checks' cease.

Partnership managers at the meetings were from different functions: fundraising, project management, project delivery so they approached issues from different perspectives.

- Who sits at the table can make a big difference to the smooth decision-making of the partnership: when partnership managers are from different disciplines this provides healthy differences in perspectives as each will naturally look at the issues from their own practical viewpoint. However, it does have implications as it may be more difficult sometimes to come to a decision.
- It is also important to take into account the different decision-making processes of each organisation based on the nature of that organisation, for example, Samaritans has a consultative culture and is run mainly with its volunteers and this will affect the decision-making capacity of their representative at the table.

External support organisations supported the partnership through their specialist role.

- Expectations of the support organisations and their mandate need to be clear for both the organisations and all partners.
- Their role needs to evolve and adapt to the partnership as it matures and needs different kinds of support.

The majority of the organisations were already good at partnering – and all of them improved over the course of the partnership.

Once trust and respect is in place (and this takes time to build), partners shared their concerns and felt they could take some risks; 'getting it wrong' which further increased learning potential within the partnership.

- Allow time to build the partnering capacity. If engagement exists at different levels within the organisation then it is easier to integrate new partnership managers who haven't had the benefit of previous bonding activities.
- Talk about what the partnership will look like and what it means for the organisations so as to build understanding of its value to them and the value of taking (measured) risks.



The Foundation flagship partnership feature

General learning points

Partnership planning & agreements

The partners did create an effective partnership even without specific goals and without knowing how far they could go.

- Generally, setting goals helps with management of expectations.
- Partnership is not always the most cost effective option so partners need to determine carefully what areas the collaboration should focus on.

Foundation-donor specific

By encouraging collaboration and actively participating in the partnership, the Foundation was acting as a partnership 'broker'.

- In the current collaborative climate donors increasingly need to understand the benefits, challenges and mechanics of partnering so that they can not only encourage partnering but also build into budgets and reporting requirements the elements associated with it. Without this the added value of partnership would not be maximised and captured.
- Learning from this collaboration has helped shape the next Foundation flagship programme, Reach (search launched June 2007).

Managing trustees is important. Following the Foundation trustee visits to the charities, they now no longer rely only on reports and have also become very closely engaged in defining the next flagship round.

- Find ways to directly engage trustees in the programme more creatively (beyond reports and presentations) to ensure complete understanding (and therefore support) of the programme benefits and challenges.
- Trustees are not the only ones to benefit from 'visits': the partners felt it would also have been a good idea for them to learn about each other's organisations in the same way.



Photography: Nick David

The Foundation flagship partnership feature

General learning points

Measurement and evaluation

All the charities struggled with finding the right way to measure impact. Acknowledging this as a common issue helped them bond.

- Partners must be engaged in something together – this starts off the process which leads to other creative directions for partnership to grow.
- The process of thinking about and designing rigorous measurement processes is a useful exercise in itself and becomes applicable to a broader range of an organisation's work.

Moving on

Writing up the case study is part of the year four moving on process to capture the journey travelled. Each organisation will benefit from being able to use it in the future for either marketing or profile raising or internal learning.

- Thinking about what to capture about the partnership in the case study required much reflection by all the individuals which they found useful. However the more useful part was reviewing the case study drafts and discussing what was in it and what was not – this led to some moments of genuine discovery. The case study is therefore a good tool for learning and change.




05

Growing even stronger

The Vodafone UK Foundation Flagship Charity Partnership is a three-year programme. All partners recognised this, however, this awareness cannot fully address the emotional aspects that a closure from a good working relationship will naturally and unavoidably trigger. But The Foundation exhibited once again the flexibility and innovation that has characterised this flagship programme all the way through: it offered to fund an extra year (2007-2008) for planning for moving on and for sustainability. The benefit of this decision was twofold: firstly the charities were able to concentrate the three year funding grant entirely on the programmes (and not divert it to planning for sustainability) and secondly, the psychological process of closure was made a bit easier. The Foundation also felt that the fourth year of funding provided a form of recognition and appreciation for the outstanding work of the charities.



A person's hands are shown holding a Polaroid photograph of a building. The person is positioned on the left side of the frame, with their arms extended towards the center. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The Polaroid photo shows a building with a prominent tower or spire. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor setting with natural light.

A note on the term 'exit' and its use in partnering

Usually partners use the terms 'exiting' or 'exit strategy' – the term 'moving on' allows for a broader range of options such as transforming the partnership into a new or different delivery mechanism with either the same or new partners or retaining the partnership but pursuing new objectives. The term is also more neutral as 'exit' can often carry negative connotations.

The Partnering Initiative

Loosely described as an 'exit strategy', the fourth year allowed the partners to think carefully about the future sustainability of their work and organisation. However they were still able to re-apply for a new round of funding from The Foundation (the new Reach initiative was launched in June 2007). The term 'moving on' therefore seems a more suitable description: moving on implies that the door is still open and some form of relationship potential remains either in the near or long term future...even if without the Foundation, then between the charities themselves.

In addition to planning for the future, funding a fourth year enabled some of the ideas that were outcomes from the three year partnership to be brought to fruition, such as further research into Help Seeking Behaviours, looking at Social Return on Investment issues, and also two case studies: this one, which has provided an excellent forum for deep reflection, discussion and learning about their three year partnership and individual case studies for the partners themselves which will focus on an organisational aspect or learning for them specifically.

Will the charities continue to work together?
How have they addressed sustainability?
Have they re-applied for the next round of flagship charity partnership?

The answers to these questions and the story of how the partners have managed the moving on process and what they learned from it will be published at the end of the fourth year (2008) as an appendix to this case study.

The partnering process in the Foundation Flagship Charity Partnership

Level of partnership work >

Time >

Phase 1

Charities work separately on building their funded programmes

- partnership in development stage.

Phase 2

Peak of working in partnership: high level of trust

- demonstrated by the partners' united reaction (dissatisfaction) of the charities to joint decision about the reporting mechanism which lead to a change in reporting/presenting format to trustees.

Phase 3

Transition year:

- preparing for sustainability
- individual programme work
- discussions between some partners regarding further collaboration.

'For me the 'aha' moment came when about one month into the partnership I saw all the partners talking together about what they were able to offer each other'

Sarah Shillito
The Vodafone UK Foundation

'In the final analysis collaboration is achieved by people. To get it imbedded in the culture of the organisation is a complex process. Having a funding partner whose stated goal is collaboration forced us to think about what that meant and how we could achieve it. We've learnt to think of collaboration on a bigger scale...it's about identifying what we collectively want to change in society and what our contribution can be to achieving that'

Dominic Rudd,
Samaritans CEO

'In reviewing the case study and discussing it with the other partners I suddenly learned so much more than in previous discussions – there were some real 'aha' moments for me'

Shelter Partnership
Manager

Acknowledgements

About the IBLF

The International Business Leaders Forum works with business, governments and civil society to enhance the contribution that companies can make to sustainable development. Founded by HRH The Prince of Wales, we are an independent, not-for-profit organisation currently supported by over 100 of the world's leading businesses.

www.iblf.org



About the Partnering Initiative

Established in 2004 in association with the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry, The Partnering Initiative is IBLF's global programme dedicated to 'developing the art and science of cross-sector partnership'. The Initiative works directly with individual partnership practitioners and organisations to build professionalism and organisational capacity to develop and deliver successful partnership work.

www.ThePartneringInitiative.org



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receives donations from Vodafone UK Limited.

The Vodafone UK Foundation focuses on helping 16-25 year olds facing
exclusion from society, whether reaching a cross road in their lives, struggling
with emotional well-being or having difficulty accessing the information that they
need. It is committed to creating sustainable change and working collaboratively
with its charity partners providing a range of resources in addition to financial
support wherever possible.

It also supports local communities in areas where Vodafone has a significant physical
presence and Vodafone employees who are involved in community activities.

Further information can be found on www.vodafoneukfoundation.org



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