

Cripplegate – Islington Giving Carers Panel

Mercers' Charitable Foundation
Church & Communities Programme

A local grant-making foundation working to address inequality in Islington

Cripplegate is a local grant making foundation for organisations working in Islington. Cripplegate formed Islington Giving in 2010 – a place based giving scheme, established to empower people, businesses and organisations to come together to create change with their communities. It has inspired a growing network of place based giving schemes across the capital. The grant from Mercers' supported the creation of two local carers panels to inform the grant making process and make choices about who and what to fund. 11 organisations have been supported in total, seven of which over a 2-3 year period.



Why the work is needed

There are an estimated 14,840 carers in the Islington borough – 80% of whom are female. The majority are aged 50-59 years old. Caring has a significant impact on physical and emotional health and on financial wellbeing. Carers often struggle to access financial help and peer support, and they lack opportunities to step away from their caring responsibilities.

Approach

At the outset Islington Giving scoped out local carers groups and services. Through visits and consultations, they identified funding needs and wishes. They also invited carers to be panel members

"As a result of the relationships I'd built, when I then messaged them and said we've got this opportunity I think some felt they could come forward." Project Lead

The Cripplegate Foundation itself promotes an asset-based approach, using the skills and knowledge of local people:

"They were really open about it being 'our' panel and we had a say in how we wanted to run it, so we had ownership of it...it was really empowering actually for us as carers to be able to fund on our experiences and what we wanted to see being offered." Panel member

In total, seven carers were recruited as panel members. The trusting relationships formed with the programme leads encouraged and enabled participation:

"I felt like I could talk openly [to Islington Giving]... they were very flexible with us, and we all came to a mutual agreement on best days.... caring responsibilities can be unpredictable, so that was my apprehension at the beginning, but they were so accommodating." Panel member

Impact



Developing Skills: Panel members developed confidence and gained skills: "There were loads of opportunities we wouldn't normally have the opportunity to do... I got a real insight into how grants are given and negotiation skills." Panel member



Reducing Isolation: Panel members described feeling isolated and lonely before their involvement: "Previously, I went through depression and isolated myself from everyone and I just focused on my kids [caring role] and that was it." Panel member



Meaningful Impact: Panel members have attended and spoken at key events and helped to develop support groups. One member is now a paid employee at Islington Giving. "All of them have gone on to do other things with us and within the borough." Project Lead

Challenges

Identifying carers for the panel: despite initially identifying over 40 groups, only 13 responded, possibly due to lack of capacity due to being volunteer led.



Islington Giving had hoped to engage with young carers as part of the project, but it soon became evident that there was a lack of provision for young carers in Islington, therefore recruiting panel members primarily from existing local projects did not result in any applications from young people

In common with many local organisations, they have experienced increasing numbers of people with multiple needs requiring support.

Learnings

- Learning from Islington Giving's previous resident-led panels helped shape the initial design. The learning gained during year 1 resulted in changes to in year 2, such as being more flexible with how the funds were used.
- There was additional learning about how best to engage with carers:

"It would be so good to build on some of the learning of how we engage with carers and what's needed, even if we don't have a specific panel for carers, we will have a better way of how we engage them in some of our other community panels." Project Lead

Organisational Resilience

Cripplegate is a resilient organisation, however, Islington Giving is more vulnerable as they are reliant on funds each year. This year fundraising has gone well:

"As an endowed funder, we have financial resources to help us deal with change. We also have a flexible staff and a supportive and engaged board." Project Lead

The Future

This current panel will not continue beyond this grant. However, Islington Giving is keen to continue working on other resident-led initiatives and would also like to further develop its work with carers.