

## First 5 Lambeth Q & A



### Harnessing the power of partnerships:

Talking to one of the CoCreate Fund recipients and new First 5 Lambeth member, Ray Mahabir, Artistic Director of Sunshine International Arts

#### What have been the benefits of the partnership approach of the CoCreate funding programme?

- 👉 I have made many new connections with new partners in the community and expanding reach through these such as with the children's centres who I've never worked with before and the dads one o'clock club.
- 👉 There have been so many benefits of collaborative working with the wider CoCreate group through the regular learning networks for instance, we shared similar experiences and challenges, drew on each other's expertise and resources.
- 👉 There has been lots of cross-referring and this has widened reach to different communities through working with other orgs eg. dads, young parents, Portuguese communities.

#### What is the biggest impact this collaborative working has had on your organisation so far?

- 👉 We now have a new cohort of families with young children that we have never engaged with before who have been signposted/reached through work with other partners.
- 👉 We have now expanded our #ThinkLocal offer to early years children and their families which wouldn't have been possible before.

### Opportunities and benefits for parents

Talking to Bel-Olivia Elias, LEAP Parents Representative and Cara Lloyd, parent Parent Volunteer at BiG Young Parents Hub

#### How have you been involved in the development of the consortium so far?

- 👉 I have been an active part of the working group developing the consortium and I've taken an active role in decisions around vision and values, designing the logo as well as creating policies & procedures; this included developing the terms for the partnership agreement.

#### Why do you think it is important for parents voices to be front and centre to this work?

- 👉 Parents know what is best for their children, they are living and breathing this experience and know their own needs.
- 👉 Doing with parents as partners and not just doing 'to' parents, builds trust that lasts and shows that the organisations really care and are committed to making it work.
- 👉 Empowering parents to know that their opinion is important will encourage them to speak up in other situations.

### What do you think will be the biggest benefits to families?

- 👤 Even more opportunities for meeting and chatting with other parents.
- 👤 New, different and engaging activities for babies and very young children.
- 👤 Some more isolated parents will be more likely to hear about what is going on as the consortium members work with a diverse range of communities.
- 👤 Working together means that the organisations might have more influence on policy and decisions that impact families with young children.
- 👤 If you already trust one of the organisations then you know you can trust the others because they are working together in the consortium.
- 👤 There will be one point of access to all the different activities, services, support and this will help finding out what else is happening locally as sometimes that is hard to do.
- 👤 Organisations that have their own expertise such as SEND, with dads, Somali culture, food, and mental wellbeing can share their knowledge with other organisations which will increase chances of activities and support being inclusive to all.

### Opportunities and benefits for members and wider community partners

Talking to long-standing LEAP VCS partner and new First 5 Lambeth member, Steve Griffin, Director, Stockwell Partnership.

### What are some of the benefits for Voluntary, community sector organisations who are members of this new consortium?

- 👤 Greater fundraising capacity by being able to bid for larger contracts that you couldn't bid for alone.
- 👤 Sharing resources such as space, staff, skills and even make the most of economies of scale for other costs.
- 👤 Members become part of a wider offer with new projects emerging that couldn't be delivered without collaboration of consortium.
- 👤 Wider beneficiary reach with increased access and engagement from specific groups or communities that would not normally use your services through trust built up over years with another member organisation.
- 👤 Each organisation is already very well connected with their own relationships with their own networks which are then shared with the consortium.
- 👤 Improved learning and skills and everyone can benefit from training and skillset development such as reciprocal training, sharing good practice, systems and policies
- 👤 Smaller grass root charities can provide specific expertise and larger organisations have infrastructure and systems that can capacity build smaller partners

## How do wider community partners benefit from this way of working do you think?

- 👉 First point of call when wanting to partner with local organisations to broaden provision and reach communities that they might not otherwise engage.
- 👉 The consortium will be a 'one stop shop' with a variety of activities offered along with expertise to share that the wider community partners and other organisations can tap into.
- 👉 There can be mutual referrals and signposting both into and out of the consortium.
- 👉 This will be one way of sustaining all of the work of LEAP community engagement team and so will benefit all those that have worked with the team over the years.

## First 5 Lambeth

Talking to Andrea Paltzer, Fundraising and Business Development Manager of Art4Space and new First 5 Lambeth member.

## What are the vision and values of First 5 Lambeth?

- 👉 The vision is to giving every baby, young child, and their families, in Lambeth a better start by bringing together the diversity and expertise of local community organisations to strengthen and broaden the opportunities on offer.
- 👉 The values outline what is important to us as a consortium:

### Creating connections:

We believe 'it takes a village' to raise a child and so we are committed to developing opportunities for families to make meaningful peer support and social networks. We also strive to make it as easy as possible for families to connect to the wider services available to them in Lambeth.

### Parents as experts:

We understand that parents are experts of their own children and so we will work co-creatively with local parents to design, develop, deliver and continually improve our activities, services and support.

### Access for everyone:

Lambeth is a diverse borough and we believe that every family should have equal opportunity to access our offer. We will ensure our activities, services and support are inclusive, in particular for those communities which are often marginalised.

### Responsive to local need:

We are passionate about our community in Lambeth and so we are focused on meeting needs at a hyper-local level. We understand the needs of families with young children are continually changing at the local and national level, and so we are committed to adapting

what we do in order to respond to needs as they arise. We will also be responsive to local opportunities that arise.

### Influencing systems change:

We seek the best for our youngest children both today and in the future and so we are committed to sharing what we learn to influence positive change for babies and young children. We are also passionate about the role that voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations can play and so will use what we learn to influence positive change in the way these organisations are supported and funded.

### Could you give us a bit of an insight into what this might look like in practise both now and in the future?

- 👉 This next year is about further developing and embedding the consortium with the support of LEAP and wider community partners.
- 👉 As we look to the future, First 5 Lambeth will provide a central hub for parents and carers of 0-5 year olds to access information on community activities, support and services.
- 👉 We will offer a signposting service, share resources, support professional development, and work to secure funding for community programmes that benefit local families.
- 👉 We will offer diverse, activities and support in areas such as early childhood development, special educational needs, nutrition, creative arts, music, sport, well-being and education.
- 👉 We will fully collaborate with wider community partners, including other VCS organisations, health care providers, Lambeth services, and education providers, to ensure that families have access to a full range of services.
- 👉 Internally, the consortium will hold regular meetings to discuss ongoing initiatives, share best practices and provide mutual support for professional development. It will create a recognisable brand that parents can easily recognise as being affiliated with First 5 Lambeth, and work towards improving services and seeking new funding opportunities.
- 👉 The consortium will always continue to co-create with parents and wider community partners through design, development and delivery of everything it does.

### Navigating the changing landscape

Talking to Tanya Spence, LEAP People in the Lead Manager

### Why is this way of working important for families with young children as circumstances become challenging?

- 👉 Our VCS plays an important role for creating social impact and bringing about community change. These often-small-scale organisations tend to be a real force for reaching communities often isolated from or not reached by statutory early years services.
- 👉 As we witnessed over the pandemic, many local community organisations stepped-up to supporting with new and urgent developing needs; helping families to do everything from eating, morning, connecting, reconnecting, and even celebrating - proving exactly why they are the backbone or relational support within our community.
- 👉 As the pandemic subsided, we as a nation were soon left facing another public health issue - in the form of rising food and energy costs. As has been critiqued - the VCS sector faced a rise in demand but also were left questioning the associated costs of meeting such demands.
- 👉 Whilst so much isn't known, what is certain is that the global landscape is ever changing and that our local VCS provides an arm of support which we need to truly value and support.