Neighbourhood Network Pilot – a Call for Conveners

Introduction

BD_Collective, working closely with the Council have been facilitating conversations that are focused on building connection, trust and belonging in neighbourhoods across the borough. It will maximise what is already in place, identify the gaps and build solid foundations for the future.

This pilot will explore how we develop a strong, vibrant and supportive neighbourhood with residents at the core of the design.

A Neighbourhood Network connects the people and places. People - hairdressers, carers, concerned neighbours - who make residents feel comfortable to share their concerns. Places - cafés, corner shops, community groups, clubs, hubs, schools, GPs - where residents like to go and connect.

No two Neighbourhood Networks will be the same. They will be shaped by the people and places that are in those neighbourhoods.

Supported by our learning partner Ratio, we will build on the learning from the BD_Collective networks. Connection, trust and a sense of belonging between social sector organisations predicts innovative and collaborative working.

Innovative and collaborative working appears to predict connection, trust and a sense of belonging between residents in a neighbourhood. And when that happens people appear better able to resolve life's challenges and rely less on public services.
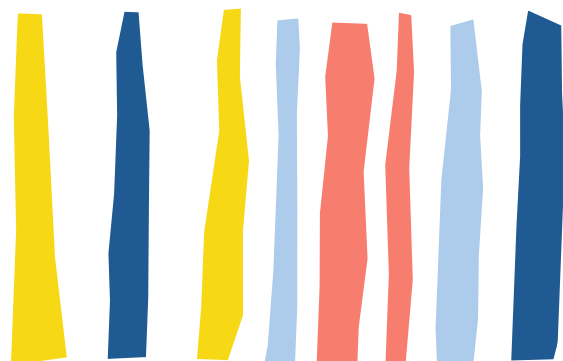
The Neighbourhood Networks will be driven by these principles and values:

Principles

1. Most residents resolve their own challenges with family, friends, neighbours and informal support. Those who need additional support will find it easy to access.

2. It's more important to connect than to 'fix'.

3. Learning is key; we won't get always get this right first time. We will test, fail, learn, adapt, repeat and then systematise the best ideas over time.

4. The whole is more than sum of the parts; no one organisation has all the answers, we can offer more as we recognise and value others.
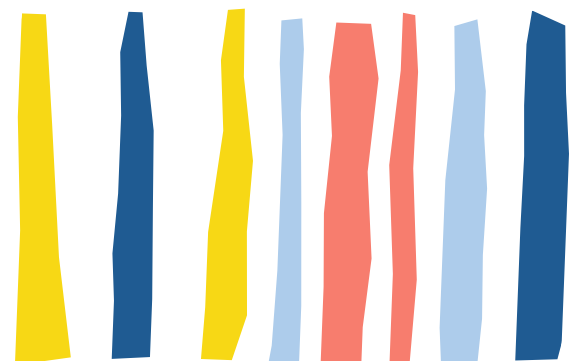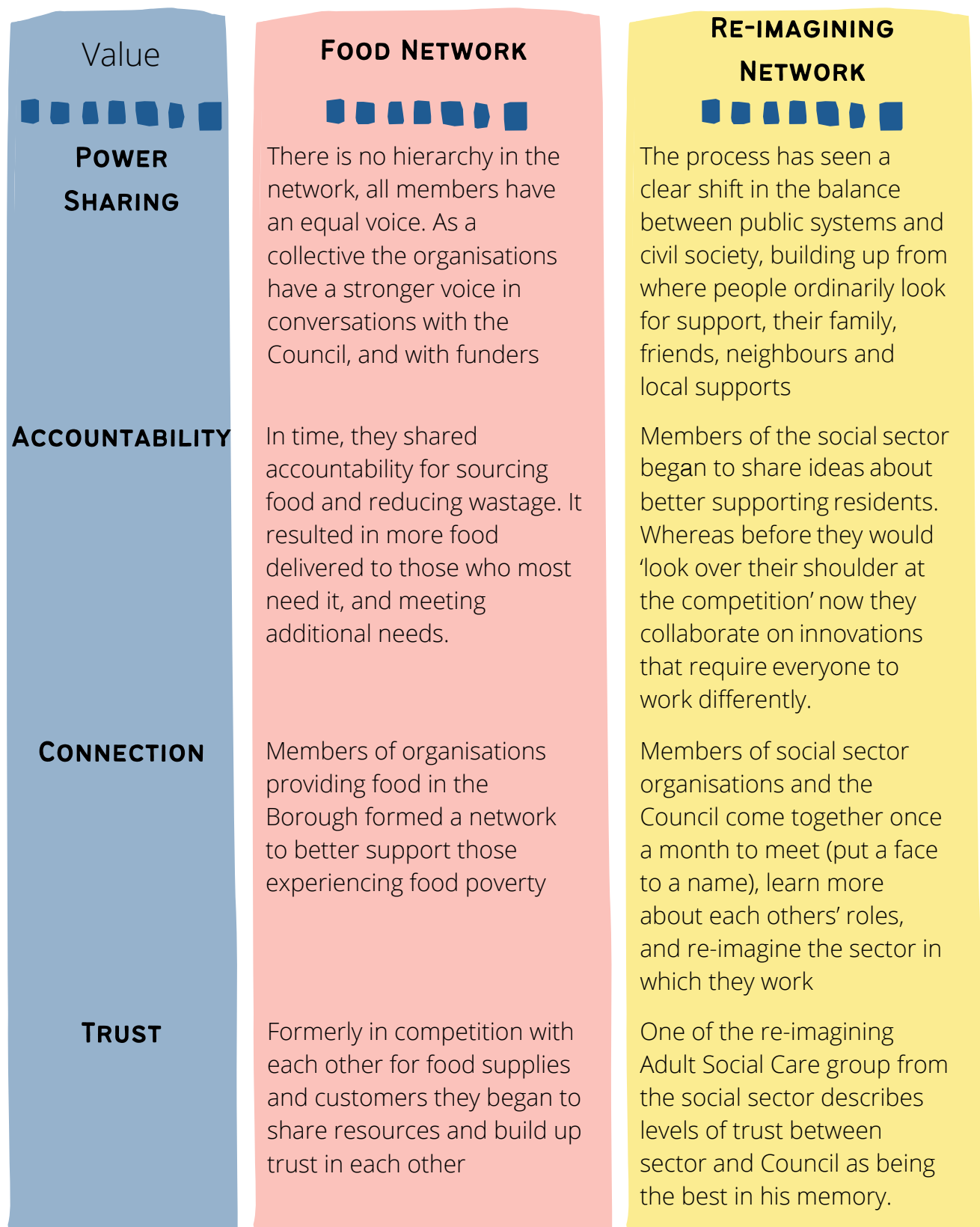
Values

BD_Collective is underpinned by four values: to shift power, share accountability, spread connection and build trust.

These values have underpinned the networks - as the following examples illustrate - and can act as a foundation for Neighbourhood Networks.

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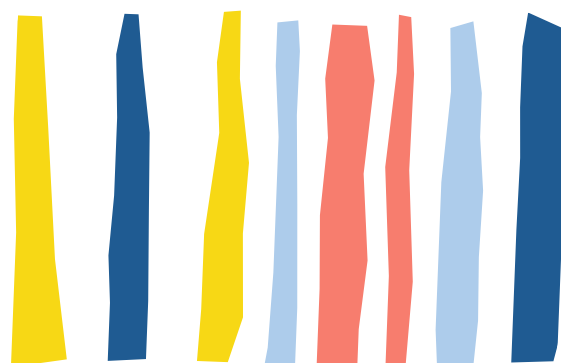
Values and examples of what they might look like in practice from Food Network & Reimagining Networks

Value	FOOD NETWORK	RE-IMAGINING NETWORK
POWER SHARING	There is no hierarchy in the network, all members have an equal voice. As a collective the organisations have a stronger voice in conversations with the Council, and with funders	The process has seen a clear shift in the balance between public systems and civil society, building up from where people ordinarily look for support, their family, friends, neighbours and local supports
ACCOUNTABILITY	In time, they shared accountability for sourcing food and reducing wastage. It resulted in more food delivered to those who most need it, and meeting additional needs.	Members of the social sector began to share ideas about better supporting residents. Whereas before they would 'look over their shoulder at the competition' now they collaborate on innovations that require everyone to work differently.
CONNECTION	Members of organisations providing food in the Borough formed a network to better support those experiencing food poverty	Members of social sector organisations and the Council come together once a month to meet (put a face to a name), learn more about each others' roles, and re-imagine the sector in which they work
TRUST	Formerly in competition with each other for food supplies and customers they began to share resources and build up trust in each other	One of the re-imagining Adult Social Care group from the social sector describes levels of trust between sector and Council as being the best in his memory.

THE ROLE OF THE CONVENER

We are inviting expressions of interest from organisations who have existing connections and the capacity to work with other Conveners to explore how to:

1. Develop creative mechanisms that enable residents, organisations, public sector agencies, and businesses across the neighbourhood to:

    a. Build trusted relationships
    b. Develop spaces to learn and reflect together
    c. Devise shared practice amongst 'helpers' (shaped by those needing 'help')
    d. Know what's going on and how to connect

Some examples of what this might look like:

    · Finding simple ways to bring people together
    · Devising ways where residents are core to shaping & steering the vision
    · Creating forms of communication that make sure people know what's going on
    · Identifying opportunities to 'do stuff' together
    · Regular sessions to enable 'the helpers' to collectively problem-solve and address tricky issues
    · Devising ways of getting to know one another – put a name to a face and ensuring 'the helpers' meet residents beyond 'helping' roles
    · Develop shared working practice between 'the helpers'
    · Reflective conversations to explore what is working well, what the challenges are and what we want to do differently

2. Provide excellent co-ordination and leadership that enables the neighbourhood to growth and flourish. This will include:

    a. Offer administration, communications and convening expertise
    b. Will lead the development of the mechanisms to create an environment where everybody who wants to contribute to change in the neighbourhood can contribute
   c. Ensure people and organisations in the neighbourhood know about and can comment on developments.

3. Be part of a wider Neighbourhood Network Design team which will include:

    a. Attending regular neighbourhood co-ordination meeting
    b. Participating in team communication (s) platform
    c. Being part of training/design meetings
    d. Sharing back and/or participating across Neighbourhood Networks.

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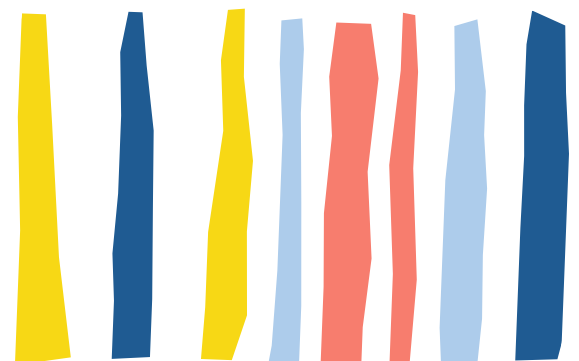
Characteristics of Convener Organisations:

· A proven ability to bring people from different walks of life together to 'do stuff'

· Strong administrative and organisational skills – able to set up systems that are easy to use

· Communications expertise that reaches everyone in the neighbourhood & beyond

· The ability to facilitate and convene in a way that includes, develops and shapes a safe and participative environment

· A passion to learn and to share learning, with a willingness to be wrong

· The capacity to communicate effectively with anyone; resident, business person, politician, community worker or professional.
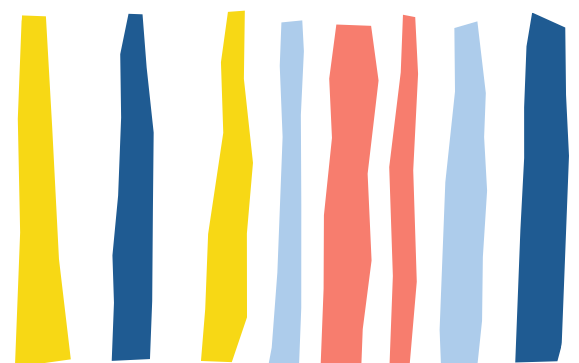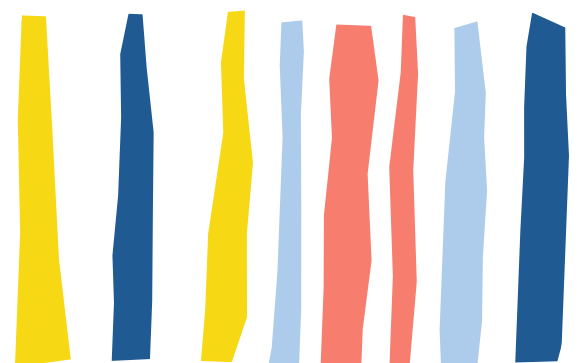
THE APPLICATION PROCESS

We are looking for up to 5 Conveners who will enable us to shape the rollout of Neighbourhood Networks across the Borough from May 2022. The Council have provided a fund of £50,000 to support this pilot.

If you are interested in being the 'Convening' Organisation for the pilot, please read through the requirements outlined in the brief and submit an expression of interest to **avril@communityresources.co.uk** by 12 noon on 24th September 2021. It can be; written (up to 2000 words), a podcast or a film (up to 15 mins). It should include:

1. The geographic neighbourhood you want to 'convene'.

2. Why your organisation is suited for this role and who will lead this work (please include; annual financial turnover, what you already do in your neighbourhood and capacity to start in November).

3. What resources you have in place to get started and how much you think you will need for the 6 months pilot.

4. Description of the mechanisms you will create to connect residents, organisations, public sector agencies, and businesses together in your neighbourhood.

We will host a Questions & Answers session on 25th August at 11-11.45am and again on 6th September at 1.30-2.15pm. Please email **alison@bdcollective.co.uk** if you want to reserve a place.

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Who decides?

All applicants will be invited to be part of a selection process which will involve; all other applicants, residents, local business, social sector and council colleagues.

We recognise that at this stage this is a limited funding pot. But it represents a significant opportunity to demonstrate how a neighbourhood network of many people and places can become more than the sum of its parts, and make a difference to the lives of local people. If we can learn how to do this, and local people feel the difference, there will be opportunities to grow the approach across the Borough.

The closing date will be 24th September at 12noon. The selection process will be during the week of 4th October and activity will be expected to start early November.