

Neighbourhood Network FAQs

What is a Neighbourhood Network?

A neighbourhood network is a hyper-local community of three or more organisations and local residents. Their aim is to work with local communities to co-design, test, and refine new innovations that engage and support that neighbourhood.

What does it mean to involve residents in the co-design?

Whilst the programme is clear that residents must be involved, the way this is done is up to the networks. What needs to be clearly documented is *how* they have been involved in co-designing the activities and networks. We believe that you know best how to work with those in your neighbourhood; however, input and ideas on how to do this are available if wanted.

We're looking for community organisers, and the opportunity to develop alongside residents and organisations who want to lead on exploring what brings us and keeps us together.

What will networks be expected to do?

The Neighbourhood Network Programme recognises each community has different needs and different strengths and that the most effective way to develop flourishing neighbourhoods is through growing local partnerships, building on local assets, where everyone who is involved in a local neighbourhood collaborates on an equal basis using their local knowledge and insight to decide and define what is needed within their own communities.

Across the networks, resident-led programmes and initiatives will develop and iterate over two-years; they will change and shape as we learn, but what those are, and what they look like, will depend on the local communities.

Why now?

Councils across the country, including Barking and Dagenham (LBBD), are rethinking how they deliver services in response to increasing demand and limited resources. LBBD is committed to a new, progressive model that focuses on providing timely and effective support, empowering individuals and communities to build resilience and independence. This approach prioritises getting the right help to people when and where they need it, with an emphasis on improving life chances and ensuring inclusivity.

Central to this transformation is the adoption of Community-Led Support (CLS), a flexible model developed by the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi). CLS focuses on building strong local partnerships where residents and organisations co-produce solutions tailored to their unique community needs. It promotes a strengths-based, empowering culture that values lived experience, minimises bureaucracy, and prioritises accessible advice and support. In Barking & Dagenham, CLS is being realised through the creation of Neighbourhood Networks, which will reflect the area's specific history, culture, and community assets.

How do I find other groups who might want to be in a network with my organisation?

It will be helpful for you to have some organisations in mind, as you know who is local to you, but if you are interested in becoming part of this work, and you don't know what other organisations are nearby, feel free to reach out and we'll try to help connect people and organisations together. The borough is constantly changing and growing, but if we're aware of a network forming near you, or some organisations that might be interested, we will connect you.

Equally, because the networks are meant to be organic, there may be some flexibility or overlap of the different 'neighbourhood' areas. Our expectation is that the whole borough will be covered, but particularly areas that are often underrepresented.

What makes me eligible to be in a network?

Organisations or groups applying to form a Neighbourhood Network will need to meet the following criteria: :

- Operating within Barking & Dagenham borough
- Evidence of direct engagement with residents within Barking & Dagenham
- Application needs to be a joint effort from a minimum of three VCSE organisations that can each appoint one key contact person for administrative purposes for each Neighbourhood Network
- Agree to using BD_Collective's Open Collective platform to get reimbursement / payment for activities for established Neighbourhood Network, subject to an approval process to be set up for governance and evaluation of the funds
- Demonstrate alignment with the Principles, Aims & Objectives of this approach
- At least one of the organisations per network with a track record of robust governance - we will carry out our regular due diligence checks.

What does the application process look like?

You will need to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) form, once your EOI has been submitted, the Programme Team will consider the viability of your network. Although we want to have at least ten networks, there will be a phased introduction. Your network may be ready for phase one, or a later phase, or not at all. A member of the Programme Team will give you feedback.

Who decides what networks are to be created and how?

The Programme Team, made up of members of the BD_Collective team, a VCSE consultant and a Council representative will decide what networks are created using the eligibility criteria listed above, as well as making a decision based on borough network coverage, networks need to be strategically placed to ensure all areas are covered.

How many organisations can be part of the network?

There is a minimum of three required, but as long as you are in close proximity to one another, there isn't a limitation on how many organisations can be involved, we would hope it will be more than three and grow over time.

What is the 'Network Developer'?

BD_Collective has a member of staff to support the development of the networks and programme, and to ensure that the learnings that are captured are shared. The network developer is there to help the networks get set up, facilitate the learning sessions, act as a liaison between networks and external agencies e.g. the learning partner, ICB, council, external training providers etc. They will work alongside the organisations, the residents, and external stakeholders, to ensure that the process is smooth as possible, help remove barriers and to see positive outcomes for our communities.

What will we need to do to 'prove' we're having impact?

You can't control the outcome of this initiative any more than we can, so end 'goals' can be hard to define. What we're looking for is a learning journey, where there is evidence of what has been tried, what has had success, and what hasn't.

There is a 'learning framework', which all networks and partners will add to throughout the two-year process and specifically during the required monthly and quarterly learning meetings. Whilst we'd love to get our hands on some really lovely, juicy, quantitative data, due to the nature of the project we also want to hear the stories and impact from the communities themselves; we want to work with networks to see what can be recorded, rather than use a generic measure to hold over the organisations in terms of 'pass/fail' results.

Who 'leads' the work?

We are not looking for a 'lead', but a collaboration. The network organisations may be of different size, and different stages of development, but we want to avoid seeing one organisation 'take-over' or try to direct in a way that isn't designed and agreed with all parties. It may require some organisations to approach this in a different way to how we can sometimes work more independently, but we do really want to see the organisations working fairly and equitably throughout the network, developing the CTAP values - Connection, Trust, Accountability and Power-sharing.

What will the monthly learning meetings be like?

The monthly and quarterly learning sessions will be developed around the agreed learning framework, which each network will need to work towards, whatever stage of the process they are at. The framework will create space for reflection and learning that can support the development of all of the networks. The framework will include a visual element to showcase what has been happening as well as some quantitative and qualitative data that will create a transparent record for those interested in the journey of the networks.

What will the quarterly learning meetings look like?

The quarterly learning meetings are an opportunity for all Neighbourhood Networks to come together and share what they've learned over the past few months. Each session will be facilitated to create a supportive, reflective space where insights can be shared, assumptions gently challenged, and meaningful learning captured.

The aim is to foster honest conversations, surface emerging themes, and support the continuous development of both the programme and the people involved.

What money is available for this work?

- £28,789.37 per Neighbourhood Network per year (for a two-year programme)

This approach is contracted under BD_Collective CBS from LBBD for a period of two years, but it should be noted that the desire is for NNs to be a long-term way of working across the Borough .

Are there any stipulations on how the money is spent?

- 67% to be spent on directly innovating with residents, an 'Innovations Budget'
 - o Programme delivery costs should include: staffing, room hire, specialist equipment etc.
- Up to 33% to be spent on a Development Budget
 - o E.g. local insight gathering, administration, participation payments, training etc.

How will the money be made available?

Your network will have a dedicated space on the Open Collective. Where the money will be hosted. The expectation is that the money is easily accessible by the network, and transactions are transparent. There will be a further 'step' for withdrawals over £5,000 made by a member of the Programme Team.

What is the Open Collective?

The Open Collective is an online platform used by BD_Collective. It holds funds that can be accessed by pre-approved admins (in this case, two admins from each network). All money requests are public, which allows for transparency.

Who are the members of the Programme Team and what is their role?

The Programme Team is made up of members of the Network Developer, a VCFSE representative, BD_Collective secretariat, and a council representative. It's their role to choose what networks are most viable and help to remove barriers to resident idea and projects where possible by connecting with partner organisations and council departments.

What happens if a new organisation wants to be part of an established, or an establishing network?

We hope that all interested groups can participate in this work. Unless there is a legitimate reason to exclude an organisation within a network, there is an expectation that they will be included.

What happens if you no longer wish to be part of the programme?

While we don't expect this to be a common occurrence, we understand there may be circumstances that make continued involvement in the neighbourhood network unviable for your organisation.

If you encounter any issues, your first step should be to discuss your concerns with your network partners, and if that is not appropriate then contact the neighbourhood developer, who will work with you to provide support and explore possible solutions.

Should you still wish to leave the programme, the network should continue without your organisation, in some rare cases, the network may no longer be viable. In this instance, the Development Lead will convene all parties in the Network to discuss the best course of action, which will then be fed back to the Programme Team, who will agree the next steps with the network based on the specific circumstances.

They will consider factors such as the programmes currently being delivered, any funds already claimed or allocated, and the potential impact on local communities.

What happens if you are not fulfilling the role of the network as stated in the service agreement?

The service agreement exists to ensure that each organisation or network understands its responsibilities.

If concerns arise about an organisation's delivery, the neighbourhood developer will begin by exploring the issues directly with them. If the situation can't be resolved through this initial conversation, it will be escalated to the Programme Team.

The Programme Team will consider ways to support the organisation or network, but ultimately, you are responsible for the overall viability of the network. In some cases, and only if there is no other way forward, this may result in the removal of an organisation from the network, or, if absolutely necessary, the closure of the network entirely.