

Appendix C – Case Studies

Community Asset Transfer Case Study

Organisation Name: Community on Solid Ground
Please give a brief introduction of COSG and it's work/purpose: CSG is an active and effective charity delivering services within a community context within the Whalley Range area of South Manchester. CSG works in co-operation with agencies and in consideration of the residents of Whalley Range and neighbouring communities. Its respected Youth on Solid Ground project specialises in working with and for young people and is open to and accessed by all sections of the youth community. It is inclusive and representative of the largely Black, Asian and ethnic minority make-up of local residents – all are welcomed and encouraged to look beyond difference and towards friendship and working together. The success of the approach is evidenced to reduce neighbour nuisance, anti social behaviour and inter-community conflict within the immediate area and further afield. Our chief aim is to support the community to interact with activities and opportunities to develop integration, community cohesion and social inclusion. We promote the health and wellbeing of all community members through active participation and engage all sections of the community, including 'hard-to-reach' young people. We use educational, social, and sports activities to help them build resilience and choose positive constructive lifestyles. We empower people to increase their confidence, motivation, skills, employability and quality of life. This helps people develop self-esteem and achieve their full potential and contribute to the community as mature and responsible individuals.
Name the MCC asset transferred to COSG and the area it is located in: Manley Park Play Centre, Whalley Range
State the approximate start date of the asset transfer process: 2013
State the date of the actual asset transfer: 24/03/2016
*Estimated number of hours/cost of asset transfer process to your organisation? *If known: Staff were involved with initial community consultation and staff and Trustees completed business planning and health checks. Our Operations Manager dedicated time for over a year and a half communicating via emails, calls, meetings.
Why was asset transfer necessary and important for COSG? The Business Plan review and consultations in 2013 demonstrated service user, staff, Trustee and volunteer support for CSG to take advantage of the local authority's community asset transfer programme and develop a central community hub in Manley Park. As an established, local, inclusive organisation CSG was well

placed to manage the centre to meet local demand. Residents expressed an interest in a range of activities, from health and fitness activities, social activities and information and guidance hub. Young people told us they would use the centre more if it was open after schools and during weekdays. The girls said there were not many other safe places to go and would like a combination of sport, play, educational and art activities.

What was your experience of the asset transfer process?

Think about:

-What went well?

-What could have been better?

-What support did you receive and from whom?

-What difference (if any) did the support make to your experience of the asset transfer process?

-How could the process of asset transfer be improved further?

CSG were storing equipment in the centre, and were interested in the opportunity to manage it, we contacted the council, councillors and Manchester Community Central (Macc).

Macc supported us with fundraising and business planning and strategy which was a general beneficial exercise for our organisation. They put us in touch with Can Do Communities and we secured a £10,000 grant for a feasibility study on the centre including professional and legal advice and mentoring, access to a charity solicitor on asset transfer and process and check lease and contractual documents, condition building survey, a funding workshop, an organisational health check, appendix to the business plan.

Following the condition survey we approached One Manchester and thanks to their crucial corporate responsibility programme investment of £20,000 we were able to bring the centre to a safe and usable standard for the public. We replaced doors, windows, the heating system, electrical wiring and parts of the roof, soffits, gutters and fascias boards. Following the renovations including work undertaken by WRPS Roofing we were able to acquire the building. One Manchester's CEO Dave Power said of the work: "We are really pleased we were able to help the community centre renovate their building. Now it can be enjoyed safely and I think this really shows how businesses and One Manchester can have a positive impact in the community".

We experienced challenges with negotiating with the council during the process. We would recommend that the process values small grassroots organisations delivering free services and recognise that charities lack the capacity of a resourced commercial business. The process should be simpler and less costly as charities lack funds to cover their own and council legal fees and the unpredictability of the risk of rent increases. The time spent on organising the process and planning diverted resources from fundraising and service delivery.

After a challenging year of negotiations CSG became very concerned that the council Officer would change the locks to remove CSG's access. Unlike some other community focused centres, CSG had an existing tiny MCC youth fund contract to deliver a free youth drop in. This meant that CSG was not offered a peppercorn rent and was therefore unable to commit to a deal.

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Although the council needs to assess the capability of applicants, the council should partner with small organisations to transfer the asset and cover the maintenance costs.

Despite the fact CSG is established, without the support of Macc, One Manchester and Can Do and the SiB grant, the process would have been impossible.

Due to a positive relationship with the BBC Children in Need they offered significant investment that we hope positions us to get a longer lease. We featured in The Deningeer's programme and the BBC gave us a running track, performance stage, café seating area, treehouse and sports pitch and trampoline worth tens of thousands of pounds.

Case study provided by: Group Name: Community (Youth) on Solid Ground

Board member name: Q Iqbal

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