



# Case Study: Brent Council Children's Services



# Brent Youth Services Participatory Budgeting

Between the 23rd July and the 8th August 2015, Brent Council, in collaboration with MutualGain, held three sessions designed to enable the young people and their service providers to influence spending decisions on youth services in the area. The process used was a new commissioning version of the tried and tested technique of Participatory Budgeting.

Participatory Budgeting is an exercise which allows for many parties to come together to have meaningful discussions about the allocation of financial resources and how those decisions will impact upon service provision. As part of the exercise, officers from the organization provide simplified breakdowns of the relative spend on providing current services, as well as forecasting spend on possible future services. Mutual Gain is able to provide assistance in carrying this out.

Participatory Budgeting worked well for Brent Council in this situation. Faced with a 60% cut in funding for their Children's services, they needed to identify areas in which savings could be made, as well as safeguarding services which were seen as key by the local community and service providers.



By using Participatory Budgeting, local people and service providers were able to have an **honest and open conversation** about what realistically the council could fund in future years. Mutual Gain supported Brent Council's existing staff to recruit participants for the day, as well as to organise the events and capture the dialogue to produce a report which fed into their wider consultation process.

From the day, participants identified areas where current services were duplicated, and areas where local third sector groups (who were able to network as part of the day) could potentially provide services as part of their charitable remit.

Participants were keen to select services which had **good outcomes** identified, often through **local knowledge and experience** rather than conventionally employed targets and indicators.

Participants really enjoyed being part of the events, and felt that their opinions had really been taken on board, with this event allowing more useful discussion than events they had attended before for a similar purpose. Council staff and elected representatives were left with a much better idea of what the local community really wanted, all understood that realistically difficult decisions had to be made, but that they were now being made on the basis of some really good data.

If you think Participatory Budgeting could be a useful tool for your organisation, why not choose Mutual Gain as your partner for delivering an event or scheme of work? From a one off report for a specific consultation, or an overhaul of your current engagement activities, Mutual Gain has the experience and skill to deliver. For a no obligation discussion about your requirements, contact our Business Development Lead, Owen Miller: T:07835 304699 E:owen@mutualgain.org

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Whatever your engagement needs, MutualGain has the skills and experience to help you achieve your goal, whether you want to upskill your staff, meet your statutory obligations on engaging communities, or involve the public in an important decision or behavioural change -we can help you in the following ways:

## Training

MutualGain provides a range of training for your employees and stakeholders, from one day courses to full capacity building packages which teach a number of different engagement techniques. All of our courses are highly customisable and we work with you to ensure your staff are learning the skills they need from people who have experience of carrying out these methods across the public and charitable sector.

Trainees rate our one day programmes at 5/5.

## Supported Learning and Delivery

Our supported learning and delivery programme goes beyond the one day training to building the capacity of staff or residents to deliver engagement and listen differently to those they serve.

Our extensive experience in event delivery, coaching and partnership working, combined with our training and support packages ensures that your staff feel confident in delivering engagement events and strategies. We work with you at every stage of the planning, delivery and analysis phases to reinforce your learning and pass on best practice.

Our capacity building programme was recently evaluated by Durham University to show that social capital built through strengths based approaches delivered by MutualGain reduces crime and ASB significantly.

Our associates have worked with a variety of NHS organisations, Police, Planners, and Central Government to support engagement and commissioning staff to establish new methods of engagement and integrate them within current working practices.

**Coming soon:** We have just been approved as a **'centre to deliver OCN qualifications and accredited courses'**, and are in the process of securing accreditation for our supported delivery programme of training and capacity building in social capital.

## Delivering your Engagement Activity for you

Don't have the time or the staff to deliver a meaningful engagement process? Our team is here to support you. We use the power of your local population to gain insight into current issues as well as areas of good practice so that you can make better, more informed decisions. From the popular technique of Participatory Budgeting to the broad learning opportunities found using the World Café method, MutualGain can deliver events and processes which will change your organisation and your stakeholders' perspectives on any 'problem'.

We'd love to talk to you about working with your organisation. For more information, please contact our Business Development Lead:

**Owen Miller**

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