

# **Dorset 2050: Key Conclusions and Opportunities**

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## Our learning

Last year, we decided that we needed to spend time learning about the difference that our giving can make, in the long-term, to the communities that live and work in South East Dorset.

We wanted to learn more about the world we are living in and what this may look like in the future, hearing from experts in the immediate area, as well as those living and working within the whole county. We were also keen to be inspired about work that was happening further afield, and in counties with similarities to ours, which we would otherwise be unaware of. By building our knowledge and understanding, we hope to play a more useful role within society, and for the communities that we exist to serve, in the future.

We are a well-established funder and one of the leading benefactors in Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, East Dorset and Purbeck. We know that we have enabled much good work over the years, and we can see this in the many buildings that we have contributed to, in addition to the many funding relationships which we have developed and maintained.

In recent years, we have wondered how our giving could be expanded beyond capital costs and be used to achieve the societal changes that we believe are needed in South East Dorset. Our learning has focused on key themes which we believe to be the biggest challenges that we are facing, both now and in the future. We believe that many of these issues are interconnected and that tackling them is complex. For us to play our role in transforming society in the long-term, we believe our grant giving needs to become more transformative and less programmatic. We are keen to address the root causes of these issues with our future grant giving.

During our learning process, we have been delighted to hear from a broad range of leading subject experts living and working locally, as well as further afield; counsellors, researchers, think tanks, academics, campaigners and activists, school leaders, teachers, educators, social entrepreneurs, frontline community workers and people with many different lived experiences of social issues. Therefore, we do not seek credit for the conclusions or insights in this document as they have come from the hard work and generosity of others who have informed, inspired and challenged us in equal measure.

We have summarised our key areas of learning on the following page, and more comprehensive information can be found within our Emergent Enquiry document.

Systems and intersections of oppression	Disability	Gender	LGBTQ+	Carers
Race	Technology	Multiple and complex needs	Lived experience	Mental Health and Wellbeing
Education	Social mobility	Housing and employment	Youth Services	Older people
Challenges of an ageing population	Community cohesion and division	Loneliness and isolation	Community strengths	Intergenerational division
Climate Crisis	Climate inequality	Local and Community Action	Place and Space	Funding

## Key Conclusions

We have seen, heard and felt the passion of many people dedicated to making South East Dorset a better place for everybody. This is in addition to the insight and inspiration that has come from people doing interesting and innovative work in other areas. The breadth of our learning has meant that our focus on any one single issue has not been a deep dive. We will need to develop even more knowledge of the issues we choose to fund in the coming years.

From our insight, we believe that there are six key issue areas that pose significant challenges in realising an equitable and just future for everybody in the region. If action is not taken, we believe that these issues will remain the same at best, and in all likelihood continue to worsen for people.

We have heard that there are many divisions in South East Dorset which are seen and felt in different ways. We want the future to be better and brighter for everyone, and believe that our grant giving needs to be directed to those who face the biggest barriers and struggle the most.

### 1. Generational divisions

We know that many older people come to our county to retire and that we have an ageing population. In contrast to this, many young people who grow up in the area move away when they get older.

We have heard from many experts that we live in an ageist world where generations of people exist side by side, but with limited interaction with each other. Systems and services are based

on age. People are disenfranchised from each other. Many people are lonely and isolated. This disconnection leads to the existence and perpetuation of negative views of people from generations that are different to yours.

We have heard that when communities are divided from each other by age, they lose out on valuable and reciprocal learning and do not benefit from mutually beneficial relationships that provide them with a different outlook and nurture respect across generations.

A future where people are segregated and separated by age is not the future we want to see.

## **2. Inequitable opportunities for children and young people**

We have heard from marginalised young people directly, as well as from those who work with them, that life can be difficult. We have been shocked and saddened by the common experiences of children and young people who are disabled, have caring responsibilities, are from communities of colour, live in poverty, experience mental health issues or have been in care. We now understand that these young people are often the most vulnerable, traumatised, and overlooked within society and the systems that they are nurtured and developed within. Whilst everybody's experiences are unique to their situation, these young people are more likely than their more privileged peers to be absent from the classroom, to be bullied, to be excluded, to achieve lower grades, have lower aspirations and are less likely to go on to further training, education and employment. Their lifelong chances are restricted by the circumstances they are in.

We believe that all children and young people, including the most marginalised, have huge potential to positively contribute to the region. We want to see a future where children and young people from all backgrounds flourish and succeed.

## **3. Access to information, support and guidance**

We have heard that it is difficult to navigate your way through the system when you are in need of information, support and guidance. Whilst there are many people and organisations doing great work, it can be difficult to know what you need and want, find where to get this and then be able to access it in a way that suits you. We understand that services operate within systems that are siloed and disjointed, which separate people into groups according to different sets of needs. This in itself does not help people.

We have heard that those living within villages and rural areas find it difficult to access services that are largely based within more urban areas, and that they are often overlooked.

We have been told that being passed from pillar to post at the times when you are most desperate only worsens the situation that you are in. It is easy to fall between the gaps because you do not fit neatly into any one service or system.

We have also heard that those who are most socially excluded are also digitally excluded and that the digital revolution is leaving many people behind. Whilst tech solutions could enable people to access information support, advice and guidance as and when they need it, it is

unlikely that those who are most in need will benefit from this unless they can access and use tech with confidence.

We do not want to see a world where the most vulnerable continue to struggle to find the information, guidance and support that they need, and continue to be failed by the currently available services and systems.

#### **4. Absence of safe spaces**

We have heard time and time again about the importance of safe spaces and the distinct lack of them within the area for those who are most marginalised. This is particularly acute for people from the LGBTQ+ community, young people, people of colour, migrants, homeless people, people who use drugs and alcohol and those who experience mental health issues.

We have heard that funding cuts have led to the closure of buildings and the withdrawal of support that has previously existed. This has worsened many people's situations and will continue to do so in the future.

We want to see a world where everybody is afforded the luxury of feeling safe within their community.

#### **5. Mental health and wellbeing**

We have heard that many people struggle with their mental health and wellbeing and that access to the right support, at the right time and in the right way, is limited. There is not enough focus on preventing mental health problems from developing, coupled with restricted levels of funding based on the levels of need with the area. Consequently, many people are left alone to cope with the consequences of this reality. For some, this leads people to taking their own lives and for others it can mean they are unable to work, become homeless, become socially isolated and withdrawn and / or use drugs and alcohol to cope with the pain that they are in. We have heard that those with the most complex lives and the most complex mental health issues do not easily fit within current services and are the most likely to be left behind.

We have heard that whilst young people are more aware of their mental health and wellbeing, and that of their peers, many still feel stigmatised and unable to ask for support. When they do, more often than not, it is not available without having to wait for an unreasonable length of time.

We have heard that services are overwhelmed and simply cannot cope with the current demand, let alone the rise that is predicted in response to the pandemic and the economic consequences of it.

We believe that whilst there are initiatives to build individual and community resilience and that awareness of mental health issues is much stronger now than it has been in previous generations, this is not enough.

We want to see a world that is better equipped to both prevent people from developing mental health issues and provide timely and effective support for those who need it.

## **6. Climate action**

We have heard that the climate crisis is the biggest global crisis of our time and that it requires urgent action everywhere, including in South East Dorset, before the damage that people have done to the planet becomes irreversible. Whilst the challenge which this understandably poses is daunting and overwhelming, we have been inspired to understand that individual and collective community action is key, alongside global action from international governments.

We have heard that our government has been slow to act and that our local authorities have only recently developed their climate strategies. People are beginning to come together in some places within the region to share ideas, support each other and take positive action where they can. This is largely reliant on the work of passionate and committed volunteers who have an interest in the environment. The majority of people in Dorset are not yet part of the solution, but generations to come will face the consequences, with the most marginalised feeling it the most.

We want to live in a world where everybody understands the threat that the climate crisis brings to our communities and can play their part in cumulatively reducing the damage that people are causing to the planet.

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In addition to these key conclusions, we have been surprised to hear about the challenges that sit within the funding world itself, and how the good intentions of philanthropists, trusts and foundations can prevent people and organisations from getting on and doing the work that needs to be done, despite their best intentions. Complex application processes, funder preferences and only funding those you know can be deeply problematic, especially for the smallest, grass roots organisations who often fall underneath the radar, yet do amazing work at very little cost.

We have heard that there is a desperate need to provide core funding and develop trusting relationships between grant makers and grantees, with appropriate levels of support and due diligence to enable money to flow to where it is most needed.

We have heard that some individuals and groups, particularly those of colour, have such low expectations of ever successfully receiving a grant that their need for financial support has been almost completely overlooked. These individuals and groups are largely excluded from grant making and are unable to benefit from funding in the way that their white counterparts do.

We do not want philanthropists, trusts and foundations in Dorset to continue to be disconnected and separated from the communities they exist to serve.

## Opportunities for philanthropic capital

Based on the findings from our research and our own reflections on where we feel the trust can have most impact, we have identified six areas that we feel are potentially those which we wish to focus our grant-making on. These are outlined below in no particular order, they are not set in stone, and are not by any means the only things that we are interested in hearing about. We are keen to better understand the differences that our funding can have if we move from being a trust which primarily focuses on capital costs, to a transformative funder that can enable long-term and systemic change. We are keen to avoid becoming a programmatic funder as the challenges that we see are complex and require systemic changes within our communities.

We want our region to be a place for everybody, that others can look to for inspiration, innovation and best practice. To do this, we need to learn from the rest of the world and commit our time, energy and resources to enable societal change.

We are keen to hear the thoughts and views of some of the experts we have met to help us shape our future funding even further, through asking the following questions.

### ***1. Making Dorset a place for people of all ages:***

- a) What would a programmatic funder do to help make this happen?
- b) What would a transformative funder do to help make this happen?

### ***2. Making Dorset a place where all young people can thrive:***

- a) What would a programmatic funder do to help make this happen?
- b) What would a transformative funder do to help make this happen?

### ***3. Making Dorset a place where the most vulnerable can access the information and support they need:***

- a) What would a programmatic funder do to help make this happen?
- b) What would a transformative funder do to help make this happen?

### ***4. Making Dorset a safe place for everybody:***

- a) What would a programmatic funder do to help make this happen?
- b) What would a transformative funder do to help make this happen?

**5. Making Dorset a mentally healthy place for everybody:**

- a) What would a programmatic funder do to help make this happen?
- b) What would a transformative funder do to help make this happen?

**6. Making Dorset a climate conscious place:**

- a) What would a programmatic funder do to help make this happen?
- b) What would a transformative funder do to help make this happen?

## **Working with partners**

Whatever solution or approach we decide to take, we are committed to finding partners who will ensure that people with lived experience of the issues we want to address are central in designing and delivering solutions that work for people in South East Dorset. We are also committed to ensuring our work compliments other efforts happening in this space, avoiding duplication and maximising impact.

At this stage, we have decided that funding outside of these ideas is not a priority. However, if we come across something where we feel can make a significant contribution to the space, we would be open to exploring this.

The trust will begin to move towards making grants associated with this work from June 2021 onwards, with a £300k starting budget.