



## An introduction

This toolkit is based on the learning from HACT's Collaborate 2 resource sharing pilots project. This was a year-long project which worked with four clusters of small, community-based housing support providers to develop a range of approaches to sharing resources; the overall aim was to use resource sharing as a way for cluster members to build their collective capacity and influence.

HACT helped the clusters with:

- facilitation and practical help with working through some of the issues involved in developing a detailed resource-sharing plan;
- a budget of £15,000 to be spent on implementing the goals that had been identified in the plan.

In exchange, all participating organisations contributed to an evaluation and facilitated learning process between the clusters.

## The aims of Collaborate 2

The aim of the initiative was to look at ways in which small and medium-sized voluntary and community organisations can increase their resilience and get better value from their limited budgets by sharing resources.

The initiative was funded by Communities and Local Government and was aimed primarily at organisations delivering Supporting People (SP) services. It was not limited to SP providers, since we recognised that the most natural partners for them to collaborate with might be organisations working in related fields which were not receiving SP funding; however in the event, all of the organisations which took part were SP providers.

Likewise, although the intention was to build the capacity of smaller organisations, we were interested in working with partnerships which involved larger organisations and testing the extent to which they can take on a role as “community enabler”. Three of the four pilot projects involved working with larger partners in different ways.

The overall aim of the programme was to draw out the key learning from the pilot programme, and to develop a range of resources which could be used more widely within the voluntary sector.

## The four clusters

Cluster area	Cluster partners	Background
Bolton	BASE, Bolton Young People's Homelessness Project, The Bond Board, Fortalice, PAWS for Kids, Urban Outreach	A group of small local providers of homelessness services which had been meeting for some time under the sponsorship of the local authority housing department.
Durham	SHAID, DASH, Moving On, Waddington Street Centre	Four small housing support providers working in the fields of homelessness and mental health. Three had previously taken part in a successful collaborative tender as part of the previous phase of HACT's Collaborate project.
London	Asha, Ashiana, Imkaan, Latin American Women's Aid, Newham Asian Women's Project.	A group of black, asian, minority ethnic, and refugee (BAMER) domestic violence organisations which had been meeting under the aegis of Imkaan, the infrastructure agency for BAMER domestic violence projects.
Nottingham	Emmanuel House Day Centre, the Hostels Liaison Group, and The Priory Day Centre	Three homelessness providers which were the smaller members of Key Support, a city-wide floating support consortium.

## The pilots

All of the participating organisations receive funding through the Supporting People programme.

Collaborate was funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government. HACT worked with lead consultant Alan Cripps (alan@neadon.com) and a team of his colleagues to support the partnerships and to develop this resource pack.

The pilot programme ran from December 2008 to September 2009. An evaluation is also being published to capture wider lessons about collaboration, resource sharing and capacity-building. HACT will be working with its partners to share these widely.

The aim of the project was to develop and test a model of resource sharing by working with four "clusters" of agencies. The groups we worked with had already formed around other issues, and had identified resource sharing as an area they wanted to explore.

Each cluster had access to six days of facilitation from HACT's lead consultant on this project, Alan Cripps, or one of his team of colleagues; in three of the four clusters HACT also provided an initial assessment of ICT systems and capacity from the programme's ICT consultant Rob Stead. The aim of this input was to:

- help each group identify which of the many possible areas for resource sharing were most

likely to deliver benefits for all of the group members; and

- undertake some of the leg work in getting the priority areas under way

Each cluster was also allocated a budget of up to £15,000. Unlike the previous round of Collaborate projects, groups were not asked to specify at the outset how the budget would be spent; the key task for each cluster in the first phases of the project was to identify the priority area(s) for resource sharing, the goals which it wanted to achieve, and a plan setting out how the budget would be deployed to achieve the goals. The plan was then submitted to HACT for approval before funding was released.

There were no preconceived limits on what the budget could be used for – the only criteria were that the proposal must:

- focus on resource sharing;
- spell out how the chosen activities would strengthen the capacity of the cluster's members;
- include a section explaining how the gains from the pilot programme would be sustained and built on;
- come with the recommendation of the lead consultant.

In addition to the meetings of the individual clusters and meetings between the members of the facilitation team, HACT hosted a shared learning event towards the end of the pilot programme. The aim of the event was twofold: to give participants a chance to get to know each other and share ideas face to face, and also to distil and evaluate some of the learning from the programme so that it could be disseminated more widely. It was a condition of the grant that each cluster should participate in this event, and in the wider process of evaluating the programme.

## About HACT

HACT, *the housing action charity*, works with housing providers to improve the wellbeing and living conditions of poor and marginalised people. Our projects deliver lasting change, by harnessing the energy and enthusiasm of local people, housing providers and other organisations.

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Collaborate 2 was funded by Communities and Local Government and was a collaboration between HACT, Sitra and the National Housing Federation. HACT worked with consultant Alan Cripps ([alan@neadon.com](mailto:alan@neadon.com)) to support the partnerships and to develop the resource kit.

## Collaborate 2 resource kit

(see [www.collaborate2-hact.org.uk](http://www.collaborate2-hact.org.uk))

### WORKSHEETS

- 1 Why clustering?
- 2 Stage 1 – Forming the cluster
- 3 Stage 2 – Finding the focus
- 4 Stage 3 – Developing the workplan
- 5 Stage 4 – Taking it forward
- 6 Twelve top tips
- 7 IT tools for collaboration
- 8 Resources and contacts

### E-TOOLS AND DIAGNOSTICS

About your organisation – key facts and figures  
About your organisation – people resources survey  
Priority areas for capacity building  
Purchasing survey  
Training questionnaire