What makes hosting relationships work?

How large and small organisations support each other in the third sector

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Contents

1. Executive summary

This research explores a number of different types of hosting relationship, in different geographical locations, with different funding relationships, histories and purposes. It sets out to explore the benefits of a hosting relationship for the community anchor and the organisations they host, and what helps to make a hosting relationship successful.

A number of themes emerged:

- 'Hosting' can mean a wide variety of things. It differs between community anchors, and some community anchors have different relationships with different partners. The terminology can be confusing at times, but participants identified ways they worked in what bassac might call a hosting relationship - whether or not they used that term themselves.

- While definitions of hosting start from the idea of a building or space that might be leased to a smaller organisation, the idea of 'support' is wider than that. Shared capacity and learning was central to the relationship offered by many host organisations, especially those without an ongoing core funding base or premises.

- Learning, capacity and even funding and building space can flow both ways between the community anchor and the organisations they host. This is particularly the case where the hosted service is part of a much larger body, such as a government department or the NHS.

- The flexibility of community anchors' support for smaller organisations depends in part on their own financial stability. Given that an enormous amount of third sector funding comes from limited-term grants from public funds, the current political climate makes the future for some hosting relationships uncertain. Though this report does not explore funding relationships in detail, it suggests that those community anchors with a traditional settlement model and endowment or independent funds may be better able to weather more straitened times.

- Questions around funding appear to be encouraging some community anchors to pursue more commercial ventures alongside, or as part of, their community visions. The push to social enterprise could potentially help both community anchors and organisations they support to be more sustainable, however many of the case studies in this report were at the early stages of developing such ventures, and continue to rely largely on other sources of income at present.

- Renting out building space could of course also be defined as a social enterprise. In this, as in other areas of activity, there were creative tensions in balancing a sound financial business model with the core aims of the organisation such as social justice or community development. Many interviewees said they anticipated this could potentially come to a crisis point, though it had not done so to date. Some had formal procedures in place to deal with such questions, others dealt pragmatically with situations as they arose.

- Another potentially tricky area for the hosting relationship was the extent to which the aims of the community anchor and the host organisations could conflict. While some organisations did have a constitution, a statement of purpose or service level agreements that would rule out the use of their space for particular purposes, many began from the point (particularly when simply leasing meeting space) that any user able to pay the rent was welcome. There were cases when an unanticipated conflict of purpose arose, but for many this was a problem they would negotiate when they came to it.

- Personal relationships are seen as central to successful hosting by participants in all of the case studies. Flexibility, understanding, communication and openness seem key to building relationships between the people that make up organisations. An important element of this is having individuals with the passion and drive to make organisations and relationships a success. This not only enables change in the community, but helps to negotiate difficult times and challenging circumstances within organisations, finding the energy to pursue new ventures and adapt to change.

Given these findings, this report recommends that bassac:

- Supports members to communicate the benefits of hosting arrangements as an important aspect of the role or the voluntary sector, particularly the flexibility and shared capacity and efficiencies that hosting can enable.

- Supports members to anticipate challenges of hosting, and to improve recognition of these challenges (as well as benefits) among funders.

- Champions the skills that help to build and sustain hosting – developing relationships and trust, listening and communicating, and managing flexibilities and boundaries.

- Recognises that challenges for the third sector more widely (such as meeting diverse needs, maintaining quality standards without losing flexibility, and negotiating funding constraints particularly given reliance on limited public funds) can be faced more acutely by organisations in hosting relationships - but equally

- Recognises that many of the challenges of the third sector can be overcome using the kind of expertise and energy that creates, sustains and is strengthened through hosting relationships.

- Help members to develop training or the sharing of good practice in organisational development around hosting that emphasises the links between effective practical arrangements and effective personal relationships.

- Considers further research which might look in depth at providing more evidence on the ways that personal relationships support practical effectiveness.

2. What is hosting and how does it work?

This report examines the nature of the hosting relationship for community anchors, what the benefits of such relationships are for the organisations involved, and how these might impact on the community. It also considers the challenges that can arise from hosting, and makes recommendations for how some of these might be overcome.

The research design concentrated on understanding the experiences of organisations from a personal perspective, gathering the narratives of managers of community anchors and leaders of hosted organisations working with them. Supplemented by a small amount of background documentation, the majority of the fieldwork involved semi-structured interviews, focus groups and site visits to community anchor organisations. Interviews and focus groups were reflexive and interactive, led as much by the concerns of research participants as of the researcher, however they were centred on the following questions:

- What is hosting?
- In your experience, does the hosting relationship change over time?
- What are the benefits of hosting?
- What are the difficulties?
- What might you do differently if you were starting again?

In total, 6 individual interviews and 4 focus groups each of around an hour were recorded and transcribed. Several less formal interviews and discussions took place with workers and volunteers in community anchor and hosted organisations, and site visits were made to all of the case study organisations but one. Detailed notes on these interactions informed the findings of this study, and where appropriate excerpts from recorded interviews and focus groups are included to illustrate research findings.

The intention was to go beyond a mapping of the formal structures and contractual relationships that might be involved in hosting, in order to understand how individuals and groups negotiate the relationships that make hosting work. Therefore, this report considers the narratives of people working in or with community anchors involved in hosting, and does not contain detail on the formal aspects of these arrangements. It makes recommendations for how this small-scale study could be developed to explore more fully the dynamics and success factors for hosting (see Section 7).

2.1 What is hosting?
The research started from bassac's interest in hosting. As 'hosting' is not a long-established term, the research began from bassac's definition:

> the provision of accommodation and tenancies to smaller front line organisations; access to shared facilities; and formal and informal mentoring and support. In addition, hosting can mean providing networking opportunities, support in planning and delivery, as well as support around representation and influence for smaller community organisations and the communities they serve.

The idea was not to spend too long trying to refine a form of words to encompass all hosting relationships, but to examine how this type of arrangement is understood in

practice by a variety of community anchors.

It emerged in the initial stages of research that the idea of providing building space was a useful way to begin thinking about hosting, but did not encompass the full range of support that might be offered. It is clear that hosting is not *just* about providing a tenancy, but this report suggests that 'hosting' might also be about shared capacity, networks and organisational connections *without* the provision of physical accommodation. Some participants suggested the idea of a 'virtual building', representing the skills and capacity support they provided, to think about this type of hosting arrangement.

The table below tries to capture the range of hosting relationships that emerged during this study. This is a tool to help understanding, and is not meant to provide a rigid framework or define all the types of support relationship that are possible. Indeed, as will be explored later in the report, many community anchors maintain several different types of hosting relationship with different organisations, and the nature of the relationship can change over time.

Table 1: spectrum of hosting relationships

Type of relationship	Characteristics
Landlord and tenant	Community anchor owns a large building and provides space and facilities to smaller organisations on a contractual basis, with little further interaction between them.
Good neighbours	Community anchor provides space and facilities to smaller organisation on a contractual basis. Within the building there are shared services, spaces and facilities and the organisations may work together on some projects, share advice or develop joint initiatives.
Extended family	The community anchor may not have office or meeting space to rent out, but supports smaller organisations to find space, raise funds, or develop initiatives through a network arrangement. They may or may not be located in the same physical space.

These types of arrangements are not mutually exclusive. The 'good neighbour' model is perhaps the most usual expectation of a hosting relationship. In section 4 of the report, these types of relationship are illustrated in relation to the case study organisations.

Summary
The report examines how hosting relationships work, but recognises that hosting relationships come in a variety of forms. For ease of discussion, a typology of hosting relationships ranging from the 'landlord and tenant' model, through the 'good neighbour' model, to the 'extended family' model are suggested.

3. Social capital and hosting

Community organising and third sector activity is often linked to an increase in 'social capital' for individuals and communities. Though there are ongoing debates about the ways that the concept of social capital can be understood, the most straightforward understanding is of social capital as networks, norms and trust which are created and sustained through social relationships (see e.g. Putnam, 2000; Khan and Muir, 2006). By mixing with more people, and a wider variety of people, individuals can expand the links they have to different parts of society and the information they have about different aspects of life. This can expand the opportunities they have to access other social and economic goods including work, housing, health, help or friendships. These networks, and the opportunities that they afford, can also be shared within communities.

The benefits of social capital can come in different forms. Though social capital is most often thought of as something accessed by individuals, it can also be a useful tool for thinking about the benefits (and limitations) of hosting relationships.

For example, for an individual, knowing one's neighbours can be of benefit when needing to call on informal help, such as help with childcare in an emergency. In another example, knowing someone who works in education might mean it is possible to call on them for help in filling in a university application form. Or having a family member who works in a particular industry might help a person to find out about and access particular jobs they wouldn't otherwise know about.

Parallel types of benefits can accrue to an organisation through the networks formed by hosting arrangements. For example, sharing a building with a sympathetic organisation might mean that in an emergency they can help each other out – perhaps if a floor of the building was flooded, they might share office space until accommodation becomes available again. Links with a larger hosting organisation might mean a smaller, hosted organisation can benefit from their expertise or experience in completing grant applications. Having contact with smaller, more targeted community groups might mean larger groups are able to find out about gaps in services for communities that they would not otherwise know about, and help to meet them.

The benefits of hosting relationships can be thought through at three different levels – benefits to the host and hosted organisations; benefits to their users or participants; and benefits to the wider community (though of course these three levels are not completely separated). But the development of hosting relationships are always mediated through personal relationships, between representatives of host and hosted organisations, and their clients, users and participants. As such, much of the 'social capital' that is built through hosting relationships (and whether it is created, and whether it has positive effects) depends largely on the interactions, skills and personalities of the people involved.

Social capital can be an attractive concept for policy-makers because it appears to present a measure for qualities that are more often thought of as intangible – personal relationships, trust and understanding. But trying to imagine social capital as something that can be measured in numbers can make it harder to understand what social capital actually *is*, and how it works. Social capital does not necessarily work in the same way as economic capital. We can exchange social capital for other forms of capital (like human capital – skills – or economic capital - money), but this doesn't necessarily mean

that our stock of social capital gets smaller. For hosting relationships, social capital can be both an input – something that helps to make them work – and an outcome – where more social capital is produced through the hosting relationship.

The research for this report suggests that good hosting relationships depend on the abilities, skills and qualities of individuals within the third sector. Effective individuals are able to develop trusting, flexible and responsible relationships between and within organisations. Those relationships can be thought of as social capital; and those relationships are what enable hosting relationships to thrive. In terms of planning for and developing successful hosting relationships, we might consider measuring inputs (the skills and qualities of individuals at building relationships), outputs (the social capital or relationships that enable hosting to work) and outcomes (the better working of host and hosted organisations and benefits to the communities they serve).

Table 2: Elements of social capital as inputs and outputs of hosting relationships

Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes
Skills at building relationships	Relationship of trust between individuals	Ongoing communications between individuals and organisations
Shared interest in working together	Relationship of trust between organisations	Knowing where organisations' stand if things go wrong
Time spent listening and understanding joint needs	Shared understanding of boundaries to relationship	Opportunities to adapt relationships and organisations when needed
Innovation and ideas about new ways of working	Shared enthusiasm for working together on new idea	Connections and shared learning between participants in both host and hosted organisations
		Improved well-being of the communities served by both organisations

Summary
'Social capital' is often used to describe networks, norms and trust that people and communities can use to improve their access to economic, cultural, educational and other opportunities and support. Networks and trust are essential to building and maintaining hosting relationships, and they are produced by the work and skills of individuals in host and hosted organisations. Developing hosting relationships requires social capital, but it can also increase social capital by developing new networks and relationships of trust.

4. The case studies: varieties of hosting relationship

In this section of the report the different characteristics of each of the case study community anchors are described, relating them to the typology of hosting relationships set out in Table 1. There is both a diversity of organisational structure and a great deal of overlap within and between the case studies, reflecting the complexity of hosting arrangements.

4.1 The case study community anchors

St Margaret's House
St Margaret's House Settlement is located in Bethnal Green, east London. Established in 1889, St Margaret's provides services and projects for the local community, largely by hosting and supporting smaller organisations in their buildings, offices and meeting spaces. The settlement owns the buildings it operates out of and does not rely on government support or grants for funding. As well as renting office and meeting space, St Margaret's has a number of social enterprise initiatives which it either runs directly (including a community café on site) or supports on behalf of independent organisations (including a newly established 'charity boutique' and an arts and crafts workshop space). The intention is that these social enterprise arms will eventually be able to subsidise the hosted organisations with which they are associated.

While tenants are largely third sector organisations (including the Bangladeshi Parents and Carers Association, Quaker Social Action, and the University of the Third Age) there are also a number of other professionals who rent space (architects, a photographer, a comedian) but who form part of the settlements' community contributing their skills in appropriate ways.

Hosting arrangements at St Margaret's range from the simple leasing of office space, through short-term financial and capacity support for hosted organisations if they run into difficulties, to more intensive support in building and developing new organisations. Currently all of the St Margaret's rental space is full, and they are considering further ways to expand their ventures in the community. St Margaret's is a good example of a community anchor providing the 'good neighbour' model, though they also have a less hands-on, 'landlord and tenant' relationship with those organisations that prefer this.

Doughnut Factory
The Doughnut Factory is based in Acton, outer west London. It is not a traditional community anchor for third sector organisations, but a social enterprise arm of Action Acton, a local regeneration charity. Its location in outer London is central to the organisation's mission (promoting local enterprise and employment), but can also present potential challenges in finding tenants.

The Doughnut Factory offers flexible work space to small businesses and self-employed individuals, with an emphasis on creative industries and social enterprises. Alongside the provision of high quality office facilities, they provide business support advice, seminars and networking opportunities. The organisation encourages tenants to obtain services from each other and within the local community, to live locally and use environmentally friendly forms of transport.

The Doughnut Factory was developed organically by one of the original business tenants of the building, who approached local organisations about developing it into a social enterprise with more tenants, better facilities and a community vision. The hosting role in the sense of renting office space is thus the raison d'etre of the Doughnut Factory, but also central to its mission is the provision of the 'added value' of a community-focused organisation. Thus the Doughnut Factory is also somewhere between the 'landlord and tenant model' and the 'good neighbour' model.

Cricklewood Homeless Concern (CHC)

CHC is a community anchor in the north London borough of Brent. Initially set up as a service for homeless people, it now provides holistic services to support vulnerable and disadvantaged people to take part in society. In its new resource centre, built in 2008, the charity provides services directly to this target group, including counselling, training, befriending and advice. The resource centre also has meeting and event space which is rented to local community organisations.

CHC 'hosts' services from the Department for Work and Pensions, the local college and the local GP service, though all of these organisations are bigger than CHC itself. CHC provides them with space to deliver their service, and access to clients who they might otherwise find it difficult to contact.

Another non-traditional hosting model is a partnership between CHC and local churches to deliver night shelters over the winter period. For 2010-11 CHC is providing the strategic planning and services, while the churches provide the physical space and befriending service. This may be an area where the idea of 'hosting' becomes blurred with that of partnership – is CHC the 'virtual host' (providing leadership and expertise) or are they being hosted by the churches (who provide the physical premises for this project)? However, arguments about definitions are less important than understanding what the advantages and potential challenges of working in this way can be.

CHC has a mixture of all three hosting models – the 'landlord and tenant' model applies to those organisations simply renting meeting space in the hall; the 'good neighbour' model applies to those services which complement the core offer of CHC and are provided on site (such as DWP advice); and the 'extended family' model might apply to the work CHC is doing with churches to provide a winter night shelter off-site.

Ambleside Parish Centre

Ambleside Parish Centre is a rural community venue in the Lake District, opened in 2006 with funds from the local Anglican and Methodist churches, and a National Lottery grant. The Centre is leased to an independent Trust consisting of representatives from the churches, local organisations and voluntary groups. It rents out space to events and ongoing community activities, as well as developing initiatives directly through the Parish Centre Trust. The majority of the Centre's income comes from leasing space, to both local community businesses (such as Tai Chi and yoga classes) and to community groups (such as a youth group and a migrant women's project), many of which depend on government funding. Other activities in the Parish Centre include an older people's group, the local chiropody service, counselling sessions and an Art Society.

Some research participants described the relationship of the centre to its users as simply that of 'landlord and tenant', based around invoicing and the use of rooms at certain

times (in contrast to community activities developed directly by the centre itself). However, others were keen to stress the importance of the building as a community hub. The value of the shared space for hosting activities was increased by the shortage of similar alternative venues in a rural setting, and by the welcoming atmosphere of the Centre, which some users related to its religious basis:

> Whereas you know other places have got a very specific purpose, this is all encompassing, all welcoming I feel.

The opportunities to attract community members to one event or activity who may have visited the centre for another purpose was also mentioned, though few could identify specific examples where this had happened in practice. Thus there is at least the potential and intention for the centre to develop its hosting within the 'good neighbour' model alongside the 'landlord and tenant' role.

Health for All

Health for All is a community development charity in South Leeds. It works with local people in disadvantaged inner city neighbourhoods to help them identify unmet need and establish services in response. Health for All manages 16 projects and supports 85 community groups. Though it manages 9 community premises, most of these are leased from other organisations and Health for All does not have a specific community hub building. The organisation includes an enterprise arm which comprises their business services, creche and community transport, all of which are run as distinct social enterprises and sell their services to organisations within and outside the Health for All network.

Health for All's emphasis is on community development, and the organisation could be described as having a 'virtual hosting' role. That is, rather than sharing physical space across community groups (although this does also occur) the emphasis is on how Health for All provides capacity and expertise to smaller organisations. This often involves working with community members to identify need and help them to organise new groups or services, and to apply for funding, usually from statutory grants or from larger charitable funds. These initiatives are usually formed as independent organisations, but under the Health for All banner. Because they are linked in this way, organisations are aware of other services linked to Health for All, in the way that sharing a building might heighten awareness and ease of access. For instance, they can refer families from a support group to a counselling service, or access social enterprises including the creche or community transport provision more easily that might be the case if they were entirely distinct organisations. Health for All does lease space to other organisations within the buildings it runs, but the emphasis here is much more on the 'extended family' model of hosting, which is flexible in relation to both community needs and the availability of new funding streams.

Summary

The case studies in this research comprised a variety of hosting relationships, geographical locations, size, history, financial status, organisational mission and style. In many cases several different types of hosting relationship existed between each community anchor and their partners.

5. Benefits of hosting relationships

Hosting relationships can benefit the community anchor, organisations they host, and the communities they both serve. Aspects of the hosting relationship can benefit all three at once. For this reason this section is organised according to the types of advantages that hosting relationships can provide, rather than the beneficiaries of each.

5.1 Revenue raising
One of the most important reasons community anchors gave for entering into hosting relationships was funding. All of the community anchors involved in this research relied to some extent on renting space to smaller organisations as part of their income. This was less so for Health for All, though many of the initiatives they support do provide some form of income to the core organisation through employing staff on their own projects, or in some cases using other organisations within the hosted family (such as the community transport service).

5.2 Meeting community needs
The other central reason for hosting was that it helped community anchors to meet their core mission of serving their community. At Health for All, hosting enables the community anchor to flexibly adapt to changing needs of communities by helping them to develop new services and projects in response to their own requirements. At CHC, hosting enables the community anchor to provide additional services that are outside their core capability (such as a GP service) but which are valuable to their client group.

For users, having a range of community provision in one place, or linked through a common network, makes access much easier. It also makes it easier for service providers to reach the clients they want to work with. Again, CHC is a good example of this as hosting a range of services in their resource centre means that people who might otherwise find it difficult to attend numerous appointments at different locations across London are able to get all of these forms of support in one place, and with keyworkers on site to help them know what to access and how.

In a rural setting where there are far fewer suitable venues for large community events or centrally located services, a community anchor with flexible space to host a variety of services and groups is particularly valuable. Thus Ambleside Parish Centre probably has the biggest range of activities going on among the case studies in this report, from exercise classes and community art exhibitions in their large hall, through counselling services and social groups, to chiropody appointments in a private room. As one participant pointed out:

> It's using the facilities that the community has and being creative, whereas in the cities, you wouldn't have a chiropodist in the middle of a parish centre. They'd be in the medical centre.

Hosting services in this case enables the whole community to access services they might otherwise have to travel to another town or village to find.

5.3 Efficiency of knowing each other and being able to work across organisations
Being in the same building, or within the same network, means that workers and volunteers within hosted organisations are aware of other services and initiatives the

community can access. For example, when funding streams for a children's group within Health for All had ended, they had been able to transfer members of that group to join another initiative, and to also to invite the new members to taster sessions to help them settle in to the alternative provision.

Being located in one place enables ongoing dialogue and can help to build understanding between people working in partner organisations, so that they are able to develop joint initiatives, or simply deal with day to day issues efficiently. For example, at St Margaret's:

> [knowing everyone] is priceless... we have meetings on the stairs, and I find that the best way to work with people.

Hosted organisations are also able to benefit from shared material resources, for example the Evergreen older people's group in Ambleside had purchased furniture specifically for use at their own group meetings, but which they were happy to make available to other groups when they were not using it.

5.4 Increasing the reach of services into diverse communities

Hosted organisations can act as a gateway for people to access other services provided by the community anchor or their partners. A hosted organisation may offer a targeted project for a specific group who are not otherwise using the community anchor, but who begin to access other services as they become more familiar with the hub. Ambleside Migrant Women's Project, for example, has brought in advice services to the Parish Centre offered by the Cumbrian Multicultural Service and the Citizens' Advice Bureau. Though organised by the Migrant group, advice is accessible to all. As a result

> people have started coming in just for the odd chat... it's a hook to bring them in

and as a result they may start to use the Parish Centre more broadly.

The provision of mainstream activities or services alongside more targeted ones can increase integration across the community, and raise awareness and involvement in different community activities. At St Margaret's, the provision of a community cafe run as a social enterprise acts as a 'noticeboard' for the activities of St Margaret's House and its partners. This can serve as a way to recruit volunteers, to raise awareness of service provision, and to attract new tenants, as well as being a revenue-raising and community-building venture in itself.

5.5 Safety net and a mark of trust

In addition to the services provided through hosting, being associated with a community anchor can benefit smaller organisations by offering the possibility of seeking further support from a sympathetic ally in times of need. St Margaret's House, for example, has supported some of its tenants through funding gaps by negotiating rent holidays and helping them to apply for further funding or develop new revenue plans. Health for All has helped organisations it hosts to ensure continuity of service when a particular funding stream or project ends, by linking them to, or adapting, other hosted services.

Another benefit of being a hosted organisation can be that the association with a larger,

established and trusted community anchor acts as a reference point for the community and service users, and for funders. However, as we will see in the next section, the relationship between hosted organisation and host can also create complications for funding relationships, which Health for All in particular have experienced.

Summary
Acting as a host can be an important funding stream for a community anchor. It can also increase the range and accessibility of services the community anchor is able to offer or support as part of its central mission. Both community anchors and the organisations they support (and users) can benefit from sharing material resources as well as ideas and knowledge. Links provided by hosting can make it easier for communities to access either the anchor organisation or the hosted organisations. Partners can also benefit from association with each other by sharing the trusted status and reputation that each may have built up, funding organisations or particular communities.

6. Challenges of hosting relationships, and overcoming them

As well as benefits, the hosting relationship, as any other, presents challenges for organisations and individuals involved. Like the previous section, this discussion is based on the perceptions and experiences of workers and volunteers in community anchor and hosted organisations. Even in the most successful relationships, potential for difficulties can be anticipated, or lessons can be learned about how to overcome them. Again, as in the previous section, further research might explore these challenges over a longer period or in more detail to consider why and when participants' suggestions for overcoming them might be successful.

6.1 Balancing business imperatives and compassionate support

The two key reasons that community anchors gave for hosting – to raise revenue and to support their goals in the community – could sometimes be in tension. This could become problematic either when the community anchor was struggling to balance its own books by renting space, or when smaller organisations had trouble meeting their rental obligations. Though the community anchor's instincts might be to support smaller organisations as far as possible regardless (or especially in case of) financial need, managers were aware that this could put at risk their wider operations.

Though many reflected on this tension, none of the participants in this research had found them insurmountable. There were several examples of how difficulties had been negotiated. The Doughnut Factory, for example, had had to adapt their policy on the types of organisations that they would host in order to fill the rental space. Though they continue to favour creative social enterprises, the remit has been widened to encompass a broader range of businesses, in order to allow the shared community space and local business services to thrive.

Ambleside Parish Centre's business plan involves raising enough rental income to maintain the centre and pay for salaries, in a context where statutory funding and grants are likely to be severely reduced, and the use of the space for public and private sector business meetings also appears to have lessened. Maximising income from rents is not straightforward when the majority of users are community organisations who could not afford the highest rate. The Centre has been able to negotiate with regular community users to be flexible about which rooms they use on which days when a large alternative booking such as a wedding has been made, but ensuring that users are not upset by this requires good negotiating skills and sensitivity. Both the Centre manager and the community groups that use the space are very conscious of the need for the Centre to raise income in order to continue, but even those community groups with stable finances find it hard to pay market rents. There have also been occasions when regular community users have refused to pay an increase in rent on the basis that they would not be able to afford it, and the Centre has made concessions in order to maintain their booking.

St Margaret's had been able to support struggling organisations with rent holidays while they applied for new funding streams on three occasions in the 18 months prior to this research. These rent holidays were not negotiated without conditions, but by discussing the smaller organisation's plans and the likelihood of successful fundraising, and setting a deadline for them to become solvent again. Such arrangements are only possible when the community anchor has flexible enough finances to offer this support. Nor do they

avoid the need for difficult decisions; as acknowledged in the St Margaret's arrangements, deadlines and conditions will still need to be set beyond which the hosting relationship may have to end.

6.2 Negotiating the level of involvement and support

The levels of involvement of community anchors in the running of hosted organisations was also seen as a potential area of tension. This tended to be where one side expected a 'landlord and tenant model' while the other anticipated a 'good neighbour' model, and the tension could work both ways. A hosted organisation might feel that their community anchor was being overbearing or taking too much interest in their day to day dealings, while the community anchor believed tenants should take a more active part in the wider network. On the other hand, a community anchor might enter a relationship expecting to provide no more than the rented space to an independent organisation, whereas the smaller organisation wished to be more closely associated with the anchor.

In most cases, participants had overcome such different expectations by negotiation and flexibility, adapting different hosting relationships over time. In a small number of cases, participants described situations where expectations had been so different that relationships had deteriorated and had to end. In each of these cases, this was described as largely attributable to 'personality conflict' between key people, suggesting that the interpersonal aspects of ongoing negotiation are as important as establishing contractual arrangements at the outset.

Though the flexibility and variation in hosting relationships is usually seen as a positive attribute of hosting, there were times when its fuzziness could cause difficulties. An important example was the complexity of the relationship between Health for All and the networks and groups they support. A number of funding applications had been turned down, apparently because the funders did not understand their support relationship. Funders had argued that Health for All ought to support initiatives with their own core funding, though this is not the community anchor model that they have. In some cases, it was felt that though the involvement of Health for All should be seen as an endorsement of an organisation's legitimacy, a funding application might be more likely to succeed if it did not mention it.

There also seemed to be a lack of understanding of Health for All's model of accountability, which could lead to conflict with funders and partners:

> I think the biggest difficulty is the challenges from the gatekeepers...
> you think you're giving ownership to families, whereas some people in
> local authorities portray it is as if we are not taking responsibility,
> whereas all we are trying to do is take them along, so that if our
> funding runs out they are not just left on their own not doing anything.

Focus group participants suggested ways that they might begin to address some of these questions about levels of involvement and accountability, through improving communication with local authorities and others. This communication would not just be about the impacts services could have on the ground, but also the added benefits of working within the hosting model.

6.3 Anticipating problems that might arise

Many participants could pinpoint aspects of their experience which could be learnt from in the future. These ranged from the practical – aspects of building design not suitable for all community purposes – to the more political – establishing the purposes and boundaries of the community anchor's activities.

In Ambleside, the only faith-based community anchor in this study, the role of the churches in governing the Centre did not present a problem for the majority of research participants. In fact many found it to be of benefit to have a 'spiritual', 'welcoming' place even if users, workers or volunteers were of a different faith or no faith. However, one participant did describe practical conflicts over use of space while church services were going on in a different building, and prioritisation of community and faith use in publicity for the Centre. Like many of the areas for potential conflict, this seemed to be an issue where a clear position at the outset coupled with good ongoing personal relationships might help to avoid problems. The Centre does have a constitution setting out the faith elements of its mission. However, it seemed to be in matters of practical arrangements, rather than principle, that this emerged as a potential stumbling block in a hosting relationship.

An area of potential conflict which many community anchors had *not* anticipated was what to do should an organisation they disagreed with wish to use their building space or other support. This is not only a hypothetical situation; bassac participants in the CBCB2 group reported that members had sought advice for just such a situation, when an extremist far right organisation had wanted to rent their premises. The community anchor had felt that this would be in conflict with their organisational goals, but had not had a formal procedure in place to deal with the situation. Many case study organisations said that they 'would rent the space to anybody who will pay!' particularly where meeting rooms were concerned. Reflecting on what they might do should a similar situation arise, participants largely felt it unlikely that an organisation with opposing views would want to be involved with them. In general, there was an absence of specific protocols in place to deal with this eventuality.

Ambleside Parish Centre and Health for All provided interesting examples of how more general procedures might be applied to an such a problem.

Given Health for All's different hosting model, we discussed what might happen if, within the community development model, an autonomous group began to develop extremist sympathies. Workers argued that the best way to address this would be through a consistent community development stance that listened to the actual issues being raised and tried to discuss and address them, being clear about the boundaries of where a hosting relationship may in fact become untenable. As one participant put it:

> you might have to say the time has come where we need to part, but you would
> try and work around those feelings and those issues first, if there was a problem
> with a certain aspect of their community, then try and put them in touch with
> somebody who would know how to deal with that first.

In another case, Ambleside Parish Centre's constitution contains some provisions on the types of activities to be carried out in the centre. As a Christian organisation, teaching or worship of another faith is not permitted, although groups associated with other

faiths are welcome to use the space for other activities. On the same basis, an extremist political group might in theory be able to use the centre for a non-political event, where a political rally might be more controversial (though there does not seem to be any specific provision in the constitution to rule this out). In practice, it was thought that feeling in the village would be antagonistic to an extremist group using the centre and it might be decided not to rent space to them on this basis. In summary, it seemed that such an eventuality would have to be negotiated in practice, and was not anticipated as likely.

Summary

Striking a balance between financial and social commitments is central to maintaining a successful hosting relationship. Community anchors sometimes need to make tough decisions in order to strike this balance if hosted organisations become unable to support themselves. Being clear about the level and nature of support entailed in the hosting relationship, even if this changes over time, can be important to successful working both between host and hosted organisations, and with outside partners and funders. Anticipating possible problems in advance may help to avoid pitfalls but resilience is also likely to depend in part on the resourcefulness and established relationships within the organisations. Table 3 below attempts to summarise the benefits and challenges of hosting that were identified by research participants, as well as some of the ways to overcome the challenges.

Table 3: Benefits and challenges of hosting

Reasons for hosting	Potential additional benefits of hosting	Challenges of hosting	Meeting the challenges
To meet community needs that the host organisation can't meet itself, either providing different services or reaching different groups	Can bring to light community needs that either organisation was previously unaware of, or existing community action to meet these needs.	A hosting relationship can be more complicated than simply expanding services within the existing organisation	Assess whether the additional reach and flexibility provided by working with other organisations justifies the relationship-building work required for a successful hosting relationship
To raise revenue that will support the host organisation's core services, through rent and/or other social enterprise activities	Can help to reduce reliance on single sources of funding, and thereby increase stability of the organisation	Balancing business imperatives to stay solvent against the commitment to support other organisations	Gain a shared understanding at the outset of the roles and responsibilities of each organisation
To share knowledge and resources across organisations	Can provide opportunities to share other resources on an informal basis, e.g. space, equipment, staffing	Balancing the level of support expected by the host/hosted organisations	Anticipate potential problems and how they will be addressed, where possible
	Can increase flexibility and continuity of service, even if one organisation closes	Potential conflicts over space, mission or ethos of different organisations	Ensure ongoing communication and flexibility – but with boundaries
To provide a mark of trust and/or a safety net for smaller organisations	Can help to develop and inspire new third sector start-ups		

7. People at the heart of hosting relationships

All participants agreed that the challenges of hosting were far outweighed by its benefits for community anchors, hosted organisations and local communities. All also suggested that communication, flexibility and commitment were central to overcoming and thriving on these challenges. The importance of anticipating problems and having transparent standards and practices in place was stressed, but it was less easy to ensure the element of people skills which enables partnership to thrive. A participant in Ambleside summed up a view which seemed to be common to many involved in the study:

> It is entirely about relationships. It's eye contact and talking and sitting
> with and offering coffee to, and listening to what's being said and
> trying to get the handle on why they're saying what they're saying and
> respond. That's what it always is.

Participants at Health for All noted that the importance of this kind of interpersonal work, and the labour involved in carrying it out, was not always obvious to colleagues, funders or communities and service users:

> I can remember one woman just saying, ooh, how do you get a job
> like yours? Cos all they'd see is the tip of the service, which was me
> sipping my tea with them, and they wouldn't see the arrangement of
> the creche, or the transport, or the getting the funding for those, or
> getting the speakers and - fair enough!

Yet there could also be problems in linking training in these interpersonal skills to practical outcomes. A participant from CHC described having attended an action learning event which had been 'almost like a support group for managers!' and which she had felt rather a waste of time compared to more practical workshops based around specific questions, learning points and concrete actions.

Given that the participants felt that communication and people skills were central to realising a successful hosting relationship, but that the concrete value of this could sometimes be hard to point to, this section of the report explores the practical ways in which participants saw communication and people skills making a difference.

7.1 Communication between anchors and hosted organisations
Keeping effective communication flowing between the community anchor and the organisations they hosted was seen as essential to maintaining a successful relationship. This is hardly surprising given that many of the benefits of hosting that were identified also related to successful communication.

> I think it's important to be in a position where people feel that they
> can come to you and ask you for help... I really genuinely feel that we
> have a good relationship with the people here, just by being - what's
> the jargon? Outward facing.

What participants said about how they maintained effective communication may seem surprisingly simple. In Ambleside Parish Centre, straightforward measures like making an

effort to welcome users and visitors and spending time talking to one another in shared spaces are not seen as side issues. They are central to maintaining a successful service. Day to day interactions are seen not just as an opportunity to build a friendly working relationship, but also to anticipate and bypass problems. At the Doughnut Factory, being out and about in the shared office space enabled the centre manager to note any potential friction between hosted organisations and address them before reaching crisis point.

As the host, community anchor representatives saw their role as maintaining good relationships not just between themselves and the hosted organisations, but also among the various organisations they might host. For instance, potential conflict could arise over the use of communal kitchen space, noise impinging from one activity to another, or cross-overs of different client groups in the same space. By being available and aware of frustrations at the earliest possible juncture, community anchors were able to address issues with one or several organisations. Warm relations appeared to be self-perpetuating and the centre managers in particular were well aware of their importance, though these elements may not often be accounted for in formal performance measures or management frameworks.

7.2 Communicating the value of the hosting relationship

As noted above, many community anchors rely on outside funding bodies to sustain their organisations, as do many of the organisations they host. Sometimes these outside bodies do not understand the functioning or value of the hosting relationship, and it can even become a barrier in securing funding or forming new partnerships.

These challenges of communication echoed more general issues of perception of the third sector. One participant recalled being at a cross-sector child protection event where people in a training session discussed their associations of the third sector with words like 'powerless', 'amateur' and 'unsung heroes':

> not necessarily what they thought, but words that were associated
> with the third sector, that they had a lot of work to do but not really
> much power to do anything with it.

Health for All's experience of communicating its support role, and its approach to community development in relation to local authority frameworks for accountability was described in Section 5.2 above. Participants could become frustrated with these barriers stemming from a lack of understanding of their work, but felt there were things they could do to help. Indeed, doing so was important in enabling community anchors and their hosted organisations to succeed:

> you have to keep everybody happy... one thing we could do is
> educating some of the partners a bit more about the benefits of
> working with us... it's almost that maybe we're a threat, rather than a
> partner and an asset to what they're trying to do.
>
> Sometimes some of these local authority people want to support us,
> but they are stuck themselves in their own bureaucracy, and there is
> only so much they can do so, if you come midway, sometimes it does
> work.

Part of this reaching out to other organisations was being seen at meetings and events, networking and becoming known among other local services and organisations. CHC did this both through leaders making strategic partnerships at a senior level, and individual projects inviting their funders and partners to any opportunity to showcase the community work being achieved. This networking and promotion, both of the core service and the unique angle that CHC provides through being a community anchor, was seen as crucial:

> there's no other way that you can make sure that you're available for any opportunities that come open if they don't know about you and what you're doing... you have to work at those relationships, they don't just happen. Even if the people change, you have to be on top of it.

7.3 Passion, commitment and energy

Participants from all of the case studies stressed the importance of having individuals with the passion, commitment, and energy to make community organisations and hosting relationships succeed. Coming up with innovative solutions, having the dedication to persevere when the work became challenging, and finding the time to keep others on board seemed to be what kept hosting relationships going. Though, as discussed above, these qualities might not always be noticed in the everyday work of organisations themselves or their partners and users, making this passion and dedication visible was also important to making organisations gel together and feel supported.

Particular individuals in different organisations were described as charismatic and dedicated, suggesting that it was these personal qualities as much as formal or structural arrangements which had made their partnerships a success. In some cases, it seemed like the challenges of working in the third sector and in hosting relationships in particular could only be met through such passion and commitment, which enabled challenges to be turned into opportunities. For example, at Health for All, the reliance on short-term funding which is often seen as a hurdle, and more so when dealing with several different hosted organisations, could also be seen as a way of allowing change and adaptation:

> I think because we are reliant on [limited-term] funding, the focus always has to change in some way, the basic what you're delivering might be the same, but it might be a slightly different angle to it. So if we had an unlimited amount of money then would we change as much as we are doing? You might get stuck in a bit of a rut.

A simple way that people's relationships were made visible was through social events celebrating the achievements of hosted organisations and their users, often with these events being supported and attended by people from the community anchor and the wider community. For instance, at St Margaret's House:

> we're helping host a party for all the service users that came through the door of Quaker Social Action in the last year, in the garden. So it's things like that, having enough time and energy when people ask for your involvement, to be able to do that.

Similarly, at CHC an important advantage of the hosting role was that both workers and users could see the support they received in one place, and feel that it made up a whole and coherent offer:

> you might have one person going through a whole journey, through the centre, which is really nice.

Indeed, the resource centre has been built with this journey in mind, so that users move through the floors of the building as they receive different types of support and make progress, culminating in a group celebration in a specially reserved room on the top floor.

Summary
Personal skills and relationships were seen as central to making the structural and formal aspects of hosting work smoothly. This was important to maintain relationships between community organisations and the groups they hosted, among the hosted groups, with outside organisations and funders, and with the community. Participants recognised that communication, listening, adapting and persisting with relationships were all a form of work that they engaged in and that they valued in colleagues. However, they also noted that in day-to-day encounters this labour could go unacknowledged. Explicitly linking the work of maintaining personal relationships to the benefits it has for organisational success and practical outcomes might be one way to address this common oversight.

8. Findings and recommendations

Hosting relationships come in a variety of forms. The idea of a spectrum from a 'tenant and landlord' relationship, through that of a 'good neighbour', to an 'extended family' suggests the varying levels of involvement beyond the purely contractual provision of floorspace and services that can exist. As the case studies in this report show, it is also possible for a community anchor to host a number of organisations in different ways along this spectrum, or for the relationship to change over time.

Participants identified two key reasons for hosting: raising revenue, and providing a service to the community. Expanding the service that a community anchor alone is able to provide, by developing or supporting new services, or sharing resources or client space, was very important to participants. So was the flexibility to adapt to new community needs which hosting can provide. However, participants also all noted that without sustainable finances the community anchor itself would not be able to continue. The benefits of hosting thus interlock and support one another, but they can also sometimes be in tension.

The challenges of hosting relationships can be seen as the flip-side of the benefits. The flexibility that hosting enables can also create the potential for confusion or misunderstanding, either between hosting partners or outsiders (eg users or funders). Striking a balance between remaining financially sustainable as a community anchor can sometimes come into conflict with the wish to support smaller organisations if the hosted organisations themselves get into financial or other difficulties. Finally, expanding the services and projects provided through the anchor via hosted organisations may also have limits that need to be negotiated, for instance if a potential hosted organisation has conflicting aims to the community anchor.

The case study organisations had each encountered some or all of these challenges, but had overcome them and were positive about the benefits of hosting. The need for practical guidelines and boundaries at the outset of hosting was clear, but they also stressed that these were only effective in the presence of strong personal relationships. Recognising the impact of personalities and communication on how organisations work together, as well as how they work with users, was a central message from participants.

Given these findings, this report recommends that bassac:
- Supports members to communicate the benefits of hosting arrangements as an important aspect of the role or the voluntary sector, particularly the flexibility and shared capacity and efficiencies that hosting can enable.
- Supports members to anticipate challenges of hosting, and to improve recognition of these challenges (as well as benefits) among funders.
- Champions the skills that help to build and sustain hosting – developing relationships and trust, listening and communicating, and managing flexibilities and boundaries.
- Recognises that challenges for the third sector more widely (such as meeting diverse needs, maintaining quality standards without losing flexibility, and negotiating funding constraints particularly given reliance on limited public funds) can be face more acutely by organisations in hosting relationships; but equally
- Recognises that many of the challenges of the third sector can be overcome using

the kind of expertise and energy that creates, sustains and is strengthened through hosting relationships.
- Help members to develop training or the sharing of good practice in organisational development around hosting that emphasises the links between effective practical arrangements and effective personal relationships.
- Considers further research which might look in depth at providing more evidence on the ways that personal relationships support practical effectiveness.

These benefits are those described by staff and volunteers of community anchors and hosted organisations during interviews, focus groups and site visits. Further research might examine in more detail the perceptions of users and the wider community as to the benefits of hosting by community anchors. Such research might also explore quantitative measures or more longitudinal methods to test how the perceptions of participants about the benefits of hosting play out in practice.

9. References

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10. Acknowledgements