

The Multiplier

From a ripple to a wave of connection

Evaluation report



THE CARES FAMILY

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Foreword

When The Cares Family started in 2011, we had no money, no clear plans and no direct experience of bringing people together. We just had a good idea to reduce loneliness by building intergenerational connection, a clear set of values and organising principles, and an understanding that people sharing time, conversation and new experiences with neighbours from different backgrounds could be healing.

Over the past decade that idea has grown from a tiny community into a movement working in five locations across the UK and with significant national and international influence. We have mobilised 25,000 older and younger people to be part of the community. Our model has featured in The Guardian, The Times, The Economist and on BBC, ITV and Channel 4 News, as well as in media around the world. In 2018, the world's first ever government-level loneliness strategy, which we helped shape, was launched by the then-Prime Minister at a Cares Family event. And that same year, I was selected as one of 20 inaugural Obama Fellows to share learning with changemakers working in communities all around the world.

We have been on an extraordinary journey. And in that decade, we have learned that local relationships, and the agency they create, really can help build wider connection in a disconnected age.

But in that same period, I have also learned that social change work can be brutally hard. Resources for community are scarce. The people who have the biggest influence on our collective systems and cultures can feel remote, often unreachable, to the people with experience in communities. Getting to the point where The Cares Family was sustainable took tens of thousands of hours of work, which buffeted my own relationships and mental health. I was lucky: I had friends and family around me who could help. Nevertheless, the experience of building The Cares Family was often itself deeply isolating.

That's why, when I returned from Chicago after my first Obama Fellows gathering, The Cares Family committed to a new 'Action | Voice | Power' strategy that would not only deepen our intergenerational communities in London, Liverpool and Manchester, but also allow us to share our learning with bridge-builders all across the country so that, together, we could help turn a ripple of connection into a wave.

The Multiplier is the first of our national projects seeking to spur that ripple effect, through a unique leadership programme based in part on the Obama Fellowship. Through the project, we have directed funds to some of the most promising local changemakers in the UK; matched these early-stage social entrepreneurs to coaches who have been there and done it; and helped nurture and connect communities which are already becoming more than the sum of their parts.

We are diversifying our programmes in this way because we recognise that disconnection affects different people in different ways; that loneliness is just one symptom of a broader social malaise that includes dislocation, separation, discrimination, marginalisation and polarisation. As The Cares Family's recent report Building our Social Infrastructure says, *'as a society, we will only overcome the challenges we face if we break open the pockets of power and powerlessness which shape modern Britain and invest communities with the trust and tools they require to unleash their area's potential.'*

That's what The Multiplier seeks to do – as we came to describe our shared mission on the Obama Fellowship, to 'reconcile the estranged.' Over the coming years we will continue to invest in, connect, support and share our learning with brilliant bridge-builders all over the country. I hope you're as inspired by the work of the first 10 Multipliers, and their impact on one another, as I am.



Alex Smith
Founder/CEO, The Cares Family

“The Multiplier is the first of our national projects seeking to spur a ripple effect, through a unique leadership programme based in part on the Obama Fellowship. Through the project, we have helped nurture and connect communities which are already becoming more than the sum of their parts.”

The context



A disconnected age

We live in a disconnected age. Over the past forty years, industries and institutions of association that once bound neighbours and communities together have been buffeted by a pace of change accelerated by globalisation, digitalisation, gentrification and community transformation.

As the global financial crash and then austerity bit after 2008, high streets changed rapidly and thousands of libraries, pubs and community centres disappeared, adding to the loss of faith organisations, voluntary associations, and trades unions over the previous decades, while technological contact commonly replaced more meaningful face-to-face engagement, shrinking our bubbles, worldviews and capacity for empathy further. During that same period, elections and referendums repeatedly laid bare how our divisions had sharpened.

Now, a pandemic has forced us to further withdraw from one another for months at a time. During lockdown, one in four adults in the UK – some 16 million people – reported feeling lonely¹, with 70% saying this had an impact on their mental wellbeing². A report³ in November 2020 showed how the enforced distance of working from home could lead to more prejudice, discrimination and polarisation.

In that context, it's no wonder that our disconnection crisis is deepening. Even before the arrival of Covid-19 and national lockdowns, in 2014, two in five older people said the TV was their main form of company⁴, while in 2018 over a third of 18 to 24-year-olds said they felt alone often or always⁵.

Yet while the loneliness of separation affects older and younger people particularly acutely, chronic loneliness is in fact experienced by people from all walks of life. One in four parents feels lonely always⁶. One in five middle aged men say they have no close friends⁷. Discrimination means that people from ethnic minority backgrounds⁸ report feeling unable to access community activities and support. And so the cycle continues.

While social disconnection is clearly a *personal crisis* for those who experience it, it is also a *public health crisis*, because loneliness leads to strokes, heart attacks, dementia, depression and anxiety. And with clear links between disconnection and addiction, abuse, violence, inequality⁹, polarisation and even extremism, our withdrawal from one another is a *political crisis* too.

This is not sustainable.

That's why, in 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, The Cares Family launched The Multiplier – to help share our learning about how we can build bonds of community and connection between people with different life experiences in a rapidly changing world; to identify, connect and support some of the most promising early-stage bridge-builders in the UK; and to show that by sharing time and experiences with people from different backgrounds, we can all contribute to building a more connected age.

1 Mental Health Foundation: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/loneliness-during-coronavirus>

2 Wales Online: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/half-those-working-home-feel-18786845>

3 BBC News Online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54937713>

4 Campaign to End Loneliness: <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/the-facts-on-loneliness/>

5 BBC News Online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2018/loneliest-age-group-radio-4>

6 Campaign to End Loneliness: <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/the-facts-on-loneliness/>

7 The Times: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/all-the-lonely-people-are-men-a-fifth-have-no-friends-6rzvhl736>

8 Campaign to End Loneliness: <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/frequently-asked-questions/loneliness-and-bame-people/>

9 The Cares Family, Building our Social Infrastructure: <https://www.thecaresfamily.org.uk/blog/building-our-social-infrastructure-why-levelling-up-means-creating-a-more-socially-connected-britain>

The Multiplier

Over the past ten years, The Cares Family has built programmes that tackle isolation, loneliness, digital and attitudinal divides, specifically across the generations, in London, Liverpool and Manchester. But we know that disconnection isn't exclusive to those areas or to intergenerational separation alone. People everywhere are feeling isolated and estranged, especially since the onset of the pandemic.

But though it's true that disconnection is everywhere, so are the solutions that will help us thwart it. The nuances of how to build community in a village in Cornwall are known by the people who call that village home. The details of how disconnection can be dismantled in Nottinghamshire will come from the people in that town in Nottinghamshire. People in communities everywhere have brilliant and simple solutions to our age of isolation and separation – they just need the support to make those solutions work.

That's why The Multiplier will invest in 50 people building bridges in their own communities in their own ways over five years – to adapt, grow and multiply their initiatives to meet some of the great challenges of our time. Our goal in 2020 was not just to help resource these twenty-first century connecting institutions with £10,000 grants through our partnership with social enterprise foundation UnLtd: it was also expressly to help them to inspire others to forge local connection too; to help power to understand community, and to help communities to better leverage their collective power.

So in this first cohort of Multipliers, we were looking for social entrepreneurs, community organisers and start-up social changemakers who had the potential and the intention to make a systemic and cultural difference – so that more people across the UK can feel part of our changing world rather than left behind by it.

We were looking for leaders like Mike Niles, a former Cares Family volunteer who in creating b:friend in his hometown of Doncaster with The Cares Family's support had already brought hundreds of older and younger people together to share friendship and new experiences. We were looking for leaders like Alexandra Hoskyn, whose Chatty Cafe Scheme creates spaces for people from all walks of life to find connection and community in shops and cafes up and down the country. And we were looking for more people like Hadeel, Sade, Nick and Ruth, who had shared their stories of building connection from the community up through our *Finding Connection pamphlet*¹⁰ in 2019.

¹⁰ The Cares Family, Finding Connection in a Disconnected Age: <https://www.thecaresfamily.org.uk/blog/finding-connection-read-our-pamphlet>

We wanted The Multiplier to be a different type of fellowship to those which already existed. So as well as people who were driving systemic and cultural change through inspiring local action, we sought to support Multipliers who are intentional about *how* they do what they do, and who believe in the power of building empathy and belonging across difference through rooted, relational models. Specifically, we were looking for people who were:

- **Bridgers** – bringing people from different backgrounds together to build community and power
- **Inclusive** – passionate about diversity, equity and access as routes to togetherness
- **Experienced** – facing systemic or cultural barriers, but conscious of and confident in the power of community to overcome those challenges
- **Iterative** – open to learning and willing to risk making mistakes
- **Brave** – ambitious, authentic and action-oriented
- **Generative** – driving wider change that ripples out from their local work.

We were also looking for people who:

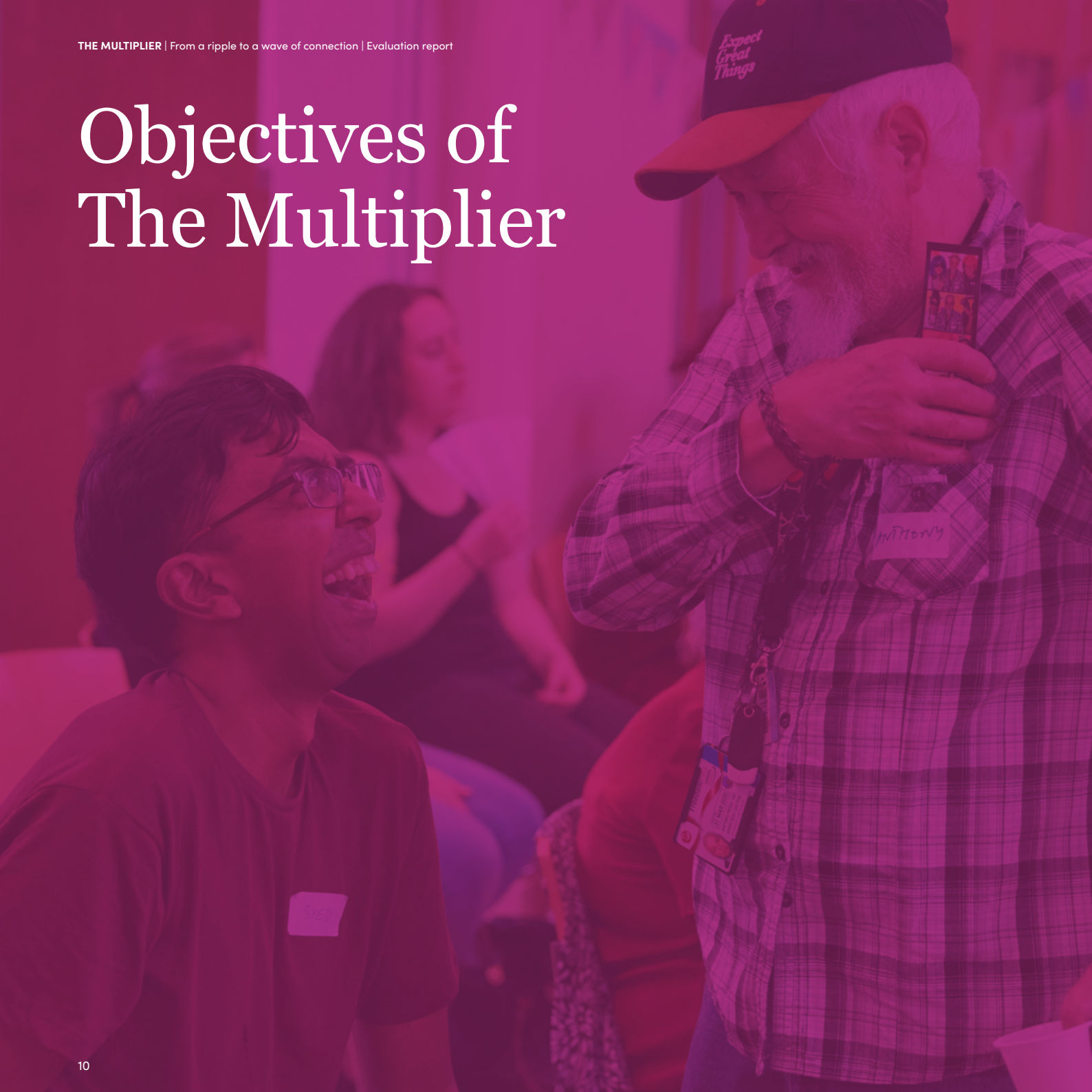
- Were leading **agile, community-led initiatives** that were at least six months old
- Had **identified a social issue** and developed a model that works to solve it
- Had already **demonstrated impact**
- Had the **ambition and a plan** to expand that impact
- Would **help shape The Multiplier** for future years.

We were amazed by the response. In this first year, 129 people applied to be part of The Multiplier.

A year later, after an intensive programme that took place online and offline during the pandemic, all 10 Multipliers said that as a result of the programme they felt less isolated as community leaders; that they felt inspired to think bigger; that they were more connected to other community leaders; and that their work had been enhanced to the point where they had been able to grow their initiatives.

This report sets out how we achieved that impact; how we built a unique programme to help social leaders to build connection in disconnecting times; and how we will build on that learning to build a more connected age in the coming years.

Objectives of The Multiplier



The Multiplier is grounded in a recognition that people who know and love their communities often understand what their neighbours need to thrive much better than people based in distant centres of power. So in this pilot year of The Multiplier, our objectives were to:

- Identify and support 10 leaders building connection in their own communities
- Help these leaders to adapt and grow their initiatives
- Support Multipliers to meet the challenges the UK faces amid the Covid-19 recovery
- Connect these leaders for peer-to-peer support, so they feel less isolated
- Help leaders work together to drive a ripple effect of connection, and in doing so support their communities to leverage their collective power and make systemic change.

The Multiplier is grounded in a recognition that people who know and love their communities often understand what their neighbours need to thrive much better than people based in distant centres of power.



A different kind of leadership programme



There are already a number of brilliant social change fellowship programmes in the UK, including those run by Ashoka, Clore Social Leadership and UnLtd itself.

The Multiplier is different. Through the programme, The Cares Family nurtures *relational* ways of working in community-led initiatives. That focus is a feature of the work of all 10 of the social changemakers selected to take part in The Multiplier – and is reflected in the programme's core contents and overarching purpose.

The programme isn't an incubator, but rather a Multiplier – participants are encouraged to pass on what they learn and are supported to tell their stories with the expectation that this will inspire others to take action in their communities too. Through that work and our other projects, The Cares Family's plan is to spur a ripple of connection, belonging and power-sharing through meaningful local relationships across the UK – driven not from the top-down, but from the bottom up.



Our first cohort of Multipliers



Our first cohort of 10 Multipliers represented a diverse and extraordinary range of people, communities, issues and approaches – but shared the belief that bringing neighbours together to share time, experiences and authentic connection can spur a sense of meaningful belonging:



BAYO ADELAJA

**Black Then, Black Now,
London**

Bayo spent much of her youth as the only Black person in the room, which inspired her to create projects that empower the Black experience. Her latest project is *Black Then, Black Now*: an intergenerational podcast engaging young Black people between the ages of 18 and 24, and their parents and grandparents, in recorded conversations on their lives. Through these conversations younger and older people share stories of racial identity, discrimination, triumph and togetherness.



ELLIE ROBINSON-CARTER

**The Photobook Project,
Cornwall**

Losing her grandfather to dementia prompted Ellie's interest in the power of creative communication to build connection around others living with the illness. The Photobook Project supports people with dementia to take control of their narrative, share tender, fleeting moments with loved ones, and build power as a result.



YASIN BOJANG

**Home Girls Unite,
London**

Yasin created Home Girls Unite as an online and offline support group for first daughters of immigrants to discuss the real experiences of childhood in marginalised communities. It works to help people connect with their multiple identities in a complex world – the worlds of their parents, their peers, and the worlds young women envisage for themselves.



HELEN BALL

**Friends of Norris
Green Park, Liverpool**

Friends of Norris Green Park brings people together through park-based activities, to create community bonds and intergenerational friendships. Helen has identified parks as key spaces in building local connection. During the pandemic, community spirit flourished, and Helen is harnessing this to foster new approaches to tackle neighbourhood problems.



JOEL WILLIAMS

**Camden and Islington
United FC, London**

Football provided Joel with opportunities, connections and leadership experience: something he wants for everyone in his community. Camden and Islington United is a community-led football club with a vision of reclaiming space for togetherness. Only a year old when Joel joined The Multiplier, the club already had Women's and Men's teams and was planning children's teams, older people's teams and leadership projects off the pitch, ensuring that everyone can be part of the community of sport, regardless of age or background.



MICHELLE BRADLEY

**The Parent Rooms,
Northern Ireland**

Michelle felt alone and isolated after giving birth, with no specialist services or support groups available in Northern Ireland. That's why she set up The Parent Rooms as a community that helps parents access the support and friendship they need. Through wellbeing workshops including art therapy, peer support groups, meditation and befriending, parents build connections with one another, their children, and the wider community.



NEELAM HEERA

**Cysters,
Birmingham**

Living with chronic conditions herself, Neelam knows the isolating potential of illnesses, and the stereotypes that surround them, particularly when it comes to issues of fertility, identity and tradition. Cysters is working to change the narrative around reproductive and mental health and create a seat at the table for people of colour when it comes to health policy – while connecting people for peer-to-peer support.



STEVE WILLIAMS

**Men on the Edge,
Nottinghamshire**

In Bassetlaw, Worksop and the wider north Nottinghamshire area, Men on the Edge brings men together in community to support those dealing with isolation, bereavement, abuse and a range of other social factors affecting men in mid and later life. Through woodwork, DIY, gardening, fishing and other community-led initiatives, Steve works with a therapeutic approach to help people feel seen, heard and valued.

**YOMI AJIORE**

**beBrave,
National**

Yomi founded beBrave to shape and nurture the leaders of tomorrow. Through community, engagement and education, the goal is to create a multitude of pathways to success that can last a lifetime. By building a community of role models, beBrave is inspiring a new generation of leaders to build businesses that can help them live more connected lives.

**YVONNE MURPHY**

**The Talking Shop,
Cardiff**

As an elected councillor, Yvonne is keen for everyone to understand their civic rights. The Talking Shop is a cultural and democracy information centre – a space for all visitors to discuss their own challenges, their communities' issues and to explore and understand the democratic process. It is a physical *what's on, what's where and who's who* listings hub, using the power of the arts to inform and connect people to drive the change they need.

All 10 Multipliers said that as a result of the programme they felt less isolated as community leaders; that they felt inspired to think bigger; that they were more connected to other community leaders; and that their work had been enhanced to the point where they had been able to grow their initiatives.

The Multiplier 2021: what we did

As The Cares Family approached its tenth birthday, we reflected on our journey and the moments, challenges, lessons, support and people who strengthened our burgeoning organisation. We considered all the things we had needed to grow and thrive in our early years, in addition to funding, and put our learning about those areas into The Multiplier programme. We hoped that sharing what we'd experienced with other grassroots leaders – and learning from them in return – would be invaluable in tackling disconnection among a wider range of communities across the UK than we were otherwise working with. In addition, we were keen to start sharing our learning from our Founder's involvement in the Obama Fellowship from 2018 to 2020.

Leadership workshops

The programme offered nine gatherings plus optional workshops. These gatherings were designed to be a space away from day-to-day social change delivery, where the cohort could share insights about the barriers they'd overcome, the change they wanted to see and the obstacles they were currently facing.

As well as supporting the leaders with the immediate challenges of the pandemic, the intention was to inspire the Multipliers to think beyond their immediate work: to help them to go deeper in their communities and to inspire a wider ripple effect by helping others to replicate their models elsewhere.

These half or full-day gatherings took place once a month. Each was themed around a topic that the cohort might encounter while leading and developing their projects. We invited experts in each field to share their stories and experiences, offer advice and answer questions.



Speakers included:

Gathering 1: Getting to know one another	Alex Smith (The Cares Family)
Gathering 2: Community building	Kim Leadbeater MP David Lammy MP
Gathering 3: Fundraising	Denise Ramsey (UnLtd) Jake Hayman (Ten Years' Time) Ellenor Baron (The Cares Family) Victoria Buckle (The Cares Family) Emily Quilter (formerly The Cares Family)
Gathering 4: Vision and strategy	Alastair Campbell (Strategist and campaigner) Kiran Kaur (GirlDreamer)
Gathering 5: Coalition building	Will Brett (Campaigns consultant) Kirsty McNeill (Save the Children) Henna Shah (#CharitySoWhite)
Gathering 6: Storytelling	Ben Lane (Acumen) Harry Grammer (New Earth)
Gathering 7: Evaluation in the age of new power	Dawn Plimmer (Collaborate) Lewis Haines (Collaborate) Eileen McKibbin (The National Lottery Community Fund) Laura Batatota (The Cares Family)
Gathering 8: Scaling and inclusive recruitment	John Hitchin (Renaissi) Dermot Finch (The Prince's Trust and The Cares Family trustee) Carrie Deacon (Social innovation consultant) Roxanne Rustem (The Cares Family)
Gathering 9: Leadership and systems change	Nick Nielsen (Osca) Pam Hardisty (Organisational development specialist) Rich Bell (The Cares Family)
Additional optional workshops	
Two sessions on anti-racism	Natalie Alleyne (The Cares Family)
Trusts and Foundations fundraising	Catrin Thomas (The Cares Family)

We chose these topics to focus on because each is not only an important tool in social changemaking, but also because, taken together, they constitute some of the key tenets of collaborative, new power building. For example, storytelling is effective because, by showing how the personal is political, stories can *emote* and therefore *motivate* people to take action to make change. Meanwhile, we wanted to be clear that some historic forms of top-down ‘expertise’, engagement and evaluation – in concentrating power rather than sharing it – have contributed to our age of disconnection, isolation and alienation – but that there is a better way. A key understanding behind The Cares Family’s philosophy and therefore The Multiplier’s approach was that the answers to our disconnection crisis lie in all of us – in agency shared more equitably through mutual relationships.

Originally, we had planned for all gatherings to take place in person, but due to the pandemic, eight of the gatherings were hosted on Zoom, with the final one an all-day in-person event which took place in August 2021 in London. As part of that event, Multipliers were invited to share their stories, motivations, experiences building bridges, and the changes they want to see in the world with funders, supporters and other community leaders at a special reception.

“The most memorable part for me was coming together in person and hearing people’s presentations – it was the climax of everything. Seeing the emotion behind each project - I haven’t cried that much in a long time.”

£10,000 grants from UnLtd

UnLtd awarded each of the Multipliers unrestricted grants of £10,000. Multipliers were able to spend this on living expenses, delivery expenditure or core costs. For many, this grant was an ‘absolute gamechanger’:

“Since December, we’ve been able to re-focus our efforts and build our infrastructure to deliver more targeted support. The funding from this programme allowed us to hire a Parent Support Coordinator who has been a Godsend. We’re reaching four times as many parents and delivering more programmes than ever. Our reputation has also grown with many health professionals now turning to us for guidance and support, allowing us to influence their practice.”

Others spoke of how they were able “to use the funding as leverage, and to build partnerships”, meaning that the grant investment had “quadrupled in value”. The fact that the grant support wasn’t “overly structured, and you could adapt it [to meet the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic], was really great.”

It was important to UnLtd and The Cares Family that grants were flexible, because organisations work best when they’re free to adapt to challenges and opportunities.

It was also vital that the Multipliers felt trusted with their grants: as the people on the ground making change, we wanted them to know that they are the experts about where and how the money could make the greatest impact in their communities.

Additional support from UnLtd

In addition to the grants, UnLtd offered the Multipliers access to a variety of further tools, workshops and networks. UnLtd's online Learning Area provided courses, guides and articles on topics including digital marketing and analytics, operating on a shoestring budget and how to map out organisational needs.

Multipliers were also invited to join UnLtd workshops and networking events on subjects such as campaigning and influencing. Multipliers who made use of these opportunities said in the evaluation of the programme that they were very helpful. Of the Multipliers who had not attended, one said that they were not aware of them – which means we need to do more to publicise these for future cohorts.

Coaching

The Cares Family connected each Multiplier with a carefully matched mentor – someone who understood their project and their pressures, who could listen, advise, champion and challenge – for six one-to-one coaching sessions.

“My coach Hillary was a perfect match for me. Her networks, her willingness to go above and beyond – she’s really passionate, and it comes through in everything she does. No one has ever asked questions like that or challenged me in that way. It gave me impetus to push doors harder. Someone said on this programme ‘until you start getting “nos”, you’re only talking to your friends.’ Hilary made me confident that even if I get a no, something good will come from it.”

One-to-one support calls

The Cares Family offered the Multipliers the opportunity to talk through any delivery challenges they were facing in informal conversations outside of the gatherings. These were intended as opportunities to drill down into the detail of building social change initiatives, but they also became critical pastoral support conversations for leaders navigating multiple pressures at once.

In the end of programme evaluation, of the eight leaders who took up the delivery support calls, all eight agreed (seven strongly) that the calls helped them to resolve challenges they were facing.

“They helped me realise the importance of knowing my ‘non-negotiables’ which has been super useful in focusing my energy on the right things – not allowing other opportunities to interfere, unless it benefits the project more widely. [They helped me think about] how my role is shifting into more of a leadership one – hearing about [The Cares Family team’s] experience was invaluable.”

Films

Powerful stories can challenge stereotypes, change narratives and inspire people to reach out across divides. To amplify the voices of – and challenge misperceptions about – communities across the UK, each Multiplier will have two-minute films made about the local relationships they are creating through their work. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, these films remain in production at the time of this report’s publication.

An alumni network

In our midpoint and end of programme evaluations, a common theme from the Multipliers was that they were ‘dreading the programme coming to an end’. We are therefore co-producing a Multiplier alumni network with the first cohort of Multipliers, to ensure the supportive environment and ambition to drive change, together, is not lost.

The alumni network will include ongoing communications to aid ideation and opportunity sharing; additional gatherings led by the Multipliers themselves; skill sharing opportunities; continued funding advice and peer-to-peer support. The group is also exploring the possibility of organising a symposium on community.

As the network of Multiplier alumni grows over the coming years, the intention is that the community of changemakers will grow too – that previous years’ Multipliers will support future years’ Multipliers, each bringing in their own learning and expanded networks to help future changemakers to thrive.

Evaluation: The Multiplier in numbers



As this was a pilot year for The Multiplier, it was vital that we captured learning about the programme's impact. We therefore conducted surveys and held discussions with Multipliers at the start, midpoint and endpoint of the programme.

When asked how likely they would be to recommend the programme to others (with 10 being the most likely and 1 the least likely) all 10 of the Multiplier leaders gave a 10.

In addition, in the endpoint evaluation:

Before entering the programme, two of the cohort agreed that they had the networks required to achieve their goals for the next three years. At the end of the programme, all 10 agreed they did.

10/10 were very satisfied with The Multiplier programme

9/10 strongly agreed that as a result of The Multiplier, they felt more confident in their organisation's future

10/10 agreed (8 strongly) that as a result of The Multiplier, they felt less isolated as a community leader

10/10 strongly agreed that as a result of The Multiplier, they felt inspired to think bigger

10/10 strongly agreed that as a result of The Multiplier, they felt connected to other community leaders

10/10 agreed (8 strongly) that as a result of The Multiplier, they have adapted or grown their initiative

10/10 agreed (8 strongly) that as a result of The Multiplier, they are thinking more about how they can create systemic change

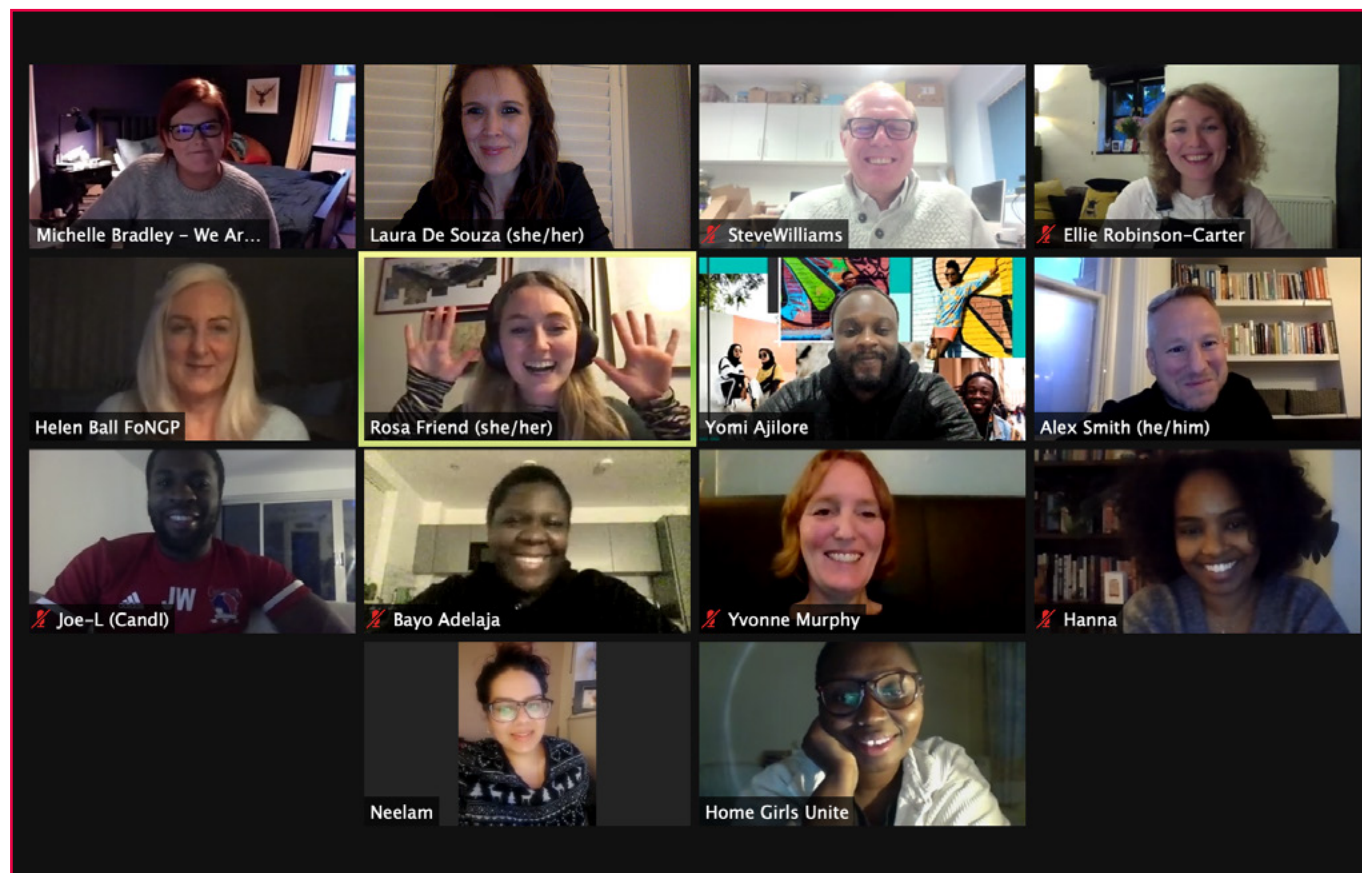
10/10 strongly agreed that as a result of The Multiplier, they feel they have someone to talk to about the challenges they are facing in leading their organisation

10/10 said the gatherings were extremely helpful

9/10 felt their project had driven wider change in their community

9/10 had applied lessons from the programme in their day-to-day roles

10/10 agreed (9 strongly) that 'the relationship with The Cares Family has enhanced my work'



As well as people who were driving systemic and cultural change through inspiring local action, we sought to support Multipliers who are intentional about how they do what they do, and who believe in the power of building empathy and belonging across difference through rooted, relational models.

Through these results and formal and informal qualitative evaluation responses, we are able to see how Multipliers progressed as leaders during their involvement in the programme:

Before entering the programme, **6** of Multipliers strongly agreed that they were confident being the spokesperson for their project. At the end of the programme, **all 10** strongly agreed.

Before entering the programme, **2** of the cohort agreed that they had the networks required to achieve their goals for the next three years. At the end of the programme, **all 10** agreed they did.

Before entering the programme, **2** Multipliers said they strongly agreed that they were confident recognising potential. At the end of the programme, **8** strongly agreed they were.

Before entering the programme, **3** Multipliers strongly agreed they had peers to talk to if they were finding work challenging. At the end of the programme, **8** strongly agreed that they did.

Before entering the programme, **3** Multipliers agreed that they regularly monitored the quality and effectiveness of their projects. By the end of the programme, **9** did.

Before entering the programme, **3** Multipliers strongly agreed that their work had to date driven wider change that had rippled out from their local work. By the end of the programme, **7** did.

Before entering the programme, **1** Multiplier strongly agreed that they felt confident delegating. At the end of the programme, **6** did.

Before the programme, **2** Multipliers strongly agreed that they felt confident helping established power to better understand their community. By the end of the programme, **8** did.

Before the programme, **2** Multipliers strongly agreed that they felt confident helping their community to leverage its collective power. By the end of the programme, **7** did.

Though other findings convey larger jumps in levels of progress, this last finding is perhaps the one that we at The Cares Family are most encouraged by. We will of course strive to ensure that every Multiplier reports, at the end of future programmes, that they are confident in their ability to help their community to leverage its collective power; but we are under no illusions about how difficult a task inspiring others to unlock their own agency can be. That fully half of

this cohort did not strongly agree that they were confident doing this at the beginning of this first programme but did by its end is a clear indication that the distinguishing objective of the Multiplier model – its focus on spurring a ripple of connection, belonging and the sharing of power – is a valid one that the programme is already fulfilling effectively.

Programme strengths



The personal approach

“No other funder has made me feel special.”

The Cares Family has spent ten years building connection between people who might not otherwise come together – to celebrate their differences, and to highlight what they have in common. We wanted The Multiplier to be a continuation of that open and nurturing environment. We therefore employed similar community building techniques for this leadership programme to those used in our core Outreach, Social Clubs and Love Your Neighbour programmes.

That meant emphasising mutuality – we explicitly told Multipliers that we anticipated that The Cares Family would learn as much from them as the other way around. Even though we always had a packed programme, we ringfenced time throughout the sessions for laughter and silliness to create a sense of play and, through that, togetherness.

Conscious that at online events you can lose spaces for informal interaction – those moments around a tea urn or in a microwave queue where you share a laugh over something trivial, which can lead to a deeper bond – we took compensatory steps. For instance, at the beginning of our first gathering Multipliers were immediately assigned a breakout room of four people where they were encouraged to chat about their bookshelves or breakfasts, their worries and expectations. This way, by the time the formal part of the gathering began, conversation had already flowed.

We also made space to get to know the Multipliers as *people* first, giving them the care and attention that they give to their communities but often don’t receive themselves. So in the pre-programme survey we asked everyone what their favourite snack was, and ahead of the first online gathering sent one to them in the post, along with programme materials. The Multipliers stated that these small gestures made a considerable difference to how they interacted with the programme and one another:

“It was so thoughtful and caring. That’s why I was able to come to the first session and feel like I was not going to be judged. I thought I’d put my all in it. You just sent me some sweets – it was so simple but so effective.”

“The stuff coming through the post – it made me think this is different, this is thoughtful. When we had our first meeting, it was in such a difficult backdrop [at the start of the winter lockdown], and I began to understand the gift I was being given [with The Multiplier]”.

Finally, at the first online gathering, we invited Multipliers to centre themselves as people by inviting them to present on ‘somewhere that means something to them or feels like home’, rather than on the goals, strategies or elevator pitches of their work itself. This meant that people were able to tell stories, emote and connect on a personal level before engaging intellectually with social change content.

One coach, who was present when the group met in person for the first time, said:

“What I loved in particular was how comfortable and open they all were in each other’s company. You would never have known that it was their first time meeting in person. Considering how isolating the last year or so of Zoom calls and remote working has been, to have achieved that level of intimacy with this group is truly magical.”

This combination of unity and deep familiarity was echoed in comments from the Multipliers, one of whom reported:

“It feels like we’ve all known each other forever. It’s the opportunity of a lifetime.”



Led by people who understand the challenges of creating social change

“You can tell, at every level, it’s been created by people who really know what it’s like to start a project which is trying to tackle social change in some way.”

In planning The Multiplier, The Cares Family team made a conscious decision to be open with things that we had struggled with when setting up community programmes and leading an organisation for the first time ourselves. We wanted to be honest about our experience of the intensity of social change work as well as about things that we had got wrong.

The intention was that this openness would help to build authentic relationships, that the group could learn from our mistakes, and that we would create a space where people felt they could be open with their own obstacles and what they did not yet know. We did not want to be seen as a ‘funder’ that they needed to impress, much less an ‘expert’ – but as a friend and convener who could offer guidance and support, and who in turn would learn from them.

For some this was key:

“The best part for me has been how welcoming and warm the programme has been which has led to people being so vulnerable and so open with their experiences and knowledge, because quite often people are so defensive with what they know – they don’t want to share it. But from the very first meeting, it was so open. It means people have been able to gain knowledge, understanding and friendships that you don’t normally get when you apply for funding.”

One Multiplier spoke about the “*wisdom, encouragement and vulnerability*” of the programme: “*It doesn’t feel like there is a hierarchy, it genuinely feels like we are all in this together*”.

Another said they saw it as “*a safe space to share challenges and ideas and to support each other*” and a “*safety net*”, where they knew they could “*pick up the phone*” if there was a challenge: “*I didn’t always need to but knowing that I could really helped.*”



Confronting imposter syndrome

“There is a punch to what I’m doing now, and it is because of the nuggets that I’ve picked up during [The Multiplier]. I am not an imposter anymore.”

All of The Multipliers bring their lived experience to their work – and brought it to one another through the programme. Lived experience was a key criterion that we were looking for in our recruitment process. Many of the Multipliers set up their projects almost by accident, having found no other support available to them or to others in their lives.

Many had a deep sense of imposter syndrome – that they weren’t ready or didn’t deserve to be doing this work. Some felt they didn’t have the skills or ‘expertise’ to lead social change work. Most did not want to lead charities (which some felt were historically problematic), and some were challenged by the notion that they were ‘leaders’ – these were people who stood shoulder to shoulder with, rather than ‘above’, their peers and communities.

These were all questions that we invited Multipliers to embrace. We zoomed in on their places and stories. We brought in speakers further along in their social change journeys to help the group to understand the multiple paths to progress. We supported Multipliers to appreciate the differences between traditional ‘expertise’, certified by a top-down authority (and often on academic learning, formal qualifications and titles, and hierarchical societal or professional positions) and the bottom-up power of ‘experience’ – and how the latter was at least as valuable if not more so than the former.

And we nurtured a community – of people who each felt alone in their journeys, but who in finding one another were able to recognise that they could make a unique impact by lifting one another up. At the end of the programme, one Multiplier said, *“I am now more confident in running my organisation without second guessing myself or my decisions”*.

Observers witnessed the leaders’ growth in skills and confidence over the course of the programme. The Cares Family team noted development in Multipliers between gatherings and one-on-one support conversations, and the coaches witnessed growth in confidence as calls progressed. One said: *“There was a massive change between calls one and two. She seemed to have stepped into her confidence, and some of the dilemmas she had been feeling seem to have become resolved.”*

The Multipliers themselves also recognised their progress:

“Before I was just making it up as I go or Googling things. I’m more informed, aware of where I can go to for help and strongly believe I have people around me who will support me.”

“I feel like I have so many more tools in my toolkit to best manage this role, and I know these will be with me forever now.”

“The Multiplier programme is way more than funding. It’s personal, you’ll grow massively, you learn so much and that will last longer than any amount of money.”

“I feel my leadership skills have improved in all areas. I feel much more confident in my skills and abilities and have been able to progress my organisation massively as a direct result of being part of this programme.”

Support with strategy, capacity-building and sustainability

“I don’t think I would trade the things I’ve learnt for anything.”

One Multiplier told us “as a founder of an organisation you tend to work in the day-to-day of it, and sometimes you forget about accountability because you’re spinning so many plates” but that as a result of being on the programme they were “learning to take a step back, think strategically, see the bigger picture”.

As grassroots leaders, the Multipliers are responsible for the delivery of their projects, for the income generation to make the work sustainable, for ensuring they’re following any applicable laws and rules and for the outreach and promotion through which people come to know about their work. On top of this, they’re balancing home lives, careers which pay their bills and, this year, the pandemic.

Michelle Bradley of The Parent Rooms had never been paid for founding and running her charity, so she fits the work in around her full-time job and three young children. Some of the parents she works with had suicidal feelings during lockdown: demand for her support, and subsequently Michelle's own emotional and practical needs, have intensified. The Multiplier programme gave Michelle the time, space and support to plan for the future:

“As a result of the gatherings we put together a fundraising plan rather than just blindly applying for funding. This includes who we want to fundraise with, what we’re fundraising for and how. I’ve written a three-year strategic plan, and one-year operational plan. I recently submitted a funding application for three years of funding, and I have used storytelling to share what we do which has led to a potential large investment from an anonymous donor. It has made me more focused and reduced my workload. It has been completely transformational. It’s changed the way I structure the day. Every day I tick something off. I used to run aimlessly towards things – that’s not me anymore.”

A few weeks after the programme ended, The Parent Rooms was awarded £100,000.

This sense of a “clearer direction and strategy” came up again and again in our evaluation. Another leader shared that *“The Multiplier has allowed me to build the foundations and structure of the organisation”*.

A few weeks after our half-day fundraising gathering, Multiplier Joel Williams from Camden and Islington United got in touch to share the news that, *“I went and applied for some money after our workshop on grants and have been successful!”*.

In our evaluation, all 10 of the Multipliers strongly agreed that as a result of The Multiplier they feel more confident in their organisation’s future.

Tackling the isolation of leadership during the pandemic

“The best part has been the people and the community we’ve built.”

The Multiplier aimed to foster belonging, community and wellbeing in leaders who foster those attributes within their own communities. The Cares Family was aware through our own experience of setting up community organisations that supporting people with complex needs can come with accumulative pressure; that in tackling isolation and its causes, we can end up isolated ourselves, with no one to turn to. One Multiplier told us, *“It’s lonely. When you’re new you don’t want to reach out and ask for support. It could feel amateurish or damage your reputation. So having people to reach out to has been great.”*

With community organisations facing an increase in demand for their work during the pandemic and 44% of charities citing burnout as a significant risk to their operation, we wanted to build a community of support around the Multipliers. In creating a space for connection for leaders building stronger communities, we were intentionally looking to future-proof those leaders, and

therefore the people and places they care about. All 10 of the community leaders agreed (8 strongly) that they felt less isolated as a community leader as a result of the being part of The Multiplier, and all 10 strongly agreed that, as a result of the programme, they felt connected to other community leaders.



Many on the programme highlighted the importance of these relationships. One leader said that having a community of support had been *“the best thing, particularly during the pandemic.”* Another said, *“The best part of the programme is the people you meet. Their inspiration and passion rub off on you, and that’s been really important during the last year, while we’ve been locked down. They’ve been a great support and encouragement.”*

In our evaluations, many leaders mentioned the diversity of the group being a key strength of the programme, at the same time as saying that it was special to find *“their people”* – people with similar motivations to make a difference (*“the people on the programme have been so varied but so similar. I’ve learnt so much”*). One Multiplier who said she was normally the only woman of colour at events and in meetings, shared that:

“There are not many times when you’re working with marginalised groups and you’re a founder that you get to sit in a room with people like you, that are from and working with marginalised groups. It’s been an eye-opening experience that there’s more of us, that I’m not on my own, and now I’ve got a community of us all doing amazing work, and I’m here to champion every single one of them.”

Sharing The Cares Family’s networks and the power of relationships

“I have made lots of new connections with civic and corporate world individuals.”

As stated in the Foreword of this report, when The Cares Family started our work bringing people together in 2011, we had no money, no plans and no real experience of bringing people together. However, during those ten years of building our organisation, we’ve met many inspiring people who have shared their advice and supported our work. We wanted to share as much of that network as possible with community leaders embarking on their own social change journeys.

In the end of programme survey, several Multipliers cited the power of these relationships: *“Though this programme I have learnt that though funding is important in growing an organisation, having support, resources and knowledge to push your ideas forward is just as important.”*

One Multiplier said that in being offered not just one supportive relationship, but several, she was more confident in her organisation’s future impact: *“The best part of the programme has been the support, from the staff at The Cares Family, the peers and the coaching. The variety of support that has come from different angles means it isn’t “here’s some money” but helps you to think about how to use that funding. The best part is the community that’s been built around us”.*

Before the programme, just two out of 10 of the cohort agreed that they had the networks necessary to achieve their project goals for the next three years. By the end of the programme, all 10 Multipliers said they did.

Meanwhile, several of the coaches we connected Multipliers with said that they were learning as much, if not more, from The Multipliers as the other way around. One commented that meeting their Multiplier was the best thing that had happened to them in 2021. We spent considerable time deliberating who to match each leader with – considering personalities as well as experience and expertise – and we believe that this was time well invested.

And after the summer reception, one long-standing Cares Family donor was so inspired by the Multipliers that he made a £1,500 donation to all 10 changemakers, further demonstrating the value of these legacy connections to the leaders and their initiatives.

Increased ambition to influence policy and make systemic change

“I’ve learnt that bringing power into community is real and possible”

From the very beginning of the programme, a stated aim of The Multiplier was not only to build on the agency of people in their own neighbourhoods, but also to connect those local leaders to people working in national systems – to *‘help established power to better understand communities, and to help communities to better leverage their collective power.’*

By the end of their participation in the programme, all 10 of Multipliers strongly agreed that as a result of being part of the programme they felt inspired to think bigger. All 10 also agreed (eight strongly) that as a result of The Multiplier they were thinking more about how they could create systemic change.

Many of the leaders spoke about better understanding how their work *“fits into the bigger picture”* and having acquired a sense that they deserved to be listened to – because they have relational and relatable solutions to some of the biggest issues in society. Before taking part in the programme, two Multipliers strongly agreed that they felt confident helping established power to better understand their community – by the end of the programme, eight did:

“We spoke a lot about speaking authentically and speaking truth to power on the programme. Before I felt this parent-child relationship – going with a begging bowl. Now I feel confident.”

“The key lessons I have taken from The Multiplier are that the daily work is very important, but the systemic change is what will drive real results. That I am not alone in doing what I do. That to be a great leader, I need to be able to step back and look at the bigger picture. That I am allowed to speak truth to power.”

“The key lessons I have taken away from The Multiplier are to follow through on the core values and work clearly to those; to use the story I have personally and that of the charity to show the need and the solution; to be bolder and bigger; to believe in myself.”



How to improve The Multiplier in future

This first year of The Multiplier was in effect a pilot. The Cares Family's plan now is to repeat this programme over the coming four years, connecting and supporting another 40 bridge-builders to expand and multiply their work and power too. Before starting the second year of The Multiplier, we will consider the following lessons against competing organisational priorities, budgets and pressures:

1. Make the programme longer

In evaluation focus groups, all Multipliers said that they wished the programme was longer, with half the group saying they wished there was the same amount of content but spread over a full year instead of eight months and half recommending more content over a year instead of eight months.

One Multiplier said, *"the gatherings were worth more than the funding"* but, with their busy schedules, it was hard for some of the Multipliers to attend all the workshops. One solution to this could be confirming the dates of the gatherings ahead of the recruitment process, so that applicants know exactly the dates they're committing to from the beginning.

2. Select Multipliers who will most benefit

One Multiplier became so busy with their organisation growing that although they were positive about their experience on the programme in the evaluation, they did not attend any gatherings in the second half. This Multiplier was more established than the rest of the cohort: they have an international following and they are running their own learning programmes for other social entrepreneurs. This suggests that we should select people who can fully commit to and will get the most out of the programme.

This does not mean we should specify how old an organisation needs to be for its leader to apply: when we discussed in the evaluation focus group whether future cohorts should focus on only very early stage ideas Multipliers said it would be *"tricky to put a timeline on it"* as initiatives can be tiny or part-time for a long time before the leader is able to focus on it, and that it *"would be a shame to lose the openness"*. Several people spoke about the value of being exposed to leaders at different stages of their leadership journeys and said that *"hearing about those different structures and stages"* brought *"positive tension"* to the group. One Multiplier was resolute: *"don't limit it. It was great that the cohort were all at different stages. It was really beneficial."*

It also became clear that as soon as we classified particular workshops as optional, only a small group would attend. In the focus group, one Multiplier fed back that it would have been positive from their perspective if optional sessions had been compulsory, as they found every session they attended to be beneficial.

3. Broaden the application outreach

We had only two weeks to do outreach for programme applications this year, due to tight timelines and wanting to get the programme off the ground quickly in order to support communities during the pandemic.

In the time that the application window was open, we promoted The Multiplier as far as we could, but to make outreach for this nationwide programme more manageable we identified 10 areas across the UK to focus on in particular. We selected these based on research into the places with the highest number of cases of Covid-19 in the country, the projected highest unemployment rates post Covid-19 and areas The Cares Family had not worked in before. We also tried to ensure Multipliers came from diverse geographies across the UK.

For each of the ten areas we wrote a press release and called local papers, researched initiatives in the area and reached out to eligible people directly. We contacted Mutual Aid groups, community centres, shared workspaces and local volunteer and community centres. We also posted regularly on The Cares Family's social media channels, reached out to community partners and networks in Liverpool, Manchester and London asking them to spread the word and got in contact with local funding newsletters. UnLtd also promoted the programme through their various channels.

Our goal was that at least 40% of Multipliers in this first year would be people of colour or from other ethnic minority backgrounds. To achieve this, we worked on outreach with trusted partners such as GirlDreamer, and we worked with UnLtd to ensure the application process removed as many barriers to involvement as possible. As a result, five out of 10 leaders in our first cohort were people from Black or Asian backgrounds.

Other goals for the demographic make-up of our first cohort were:

- **Disability represented** – 4/10 of our first cohort described themselves as having a disability.
- **LGBTQI+ represented** – while no leaders self-reported as LGBTQI+, Cysters is explicitly intersectional and offers programmes and communications designed to support LGBTQI+ people with their sexual and reproductive health.
- **At least three out of four of the home nations represented** – England, Wales and Northern Ireland were represented in this first cohort. We had also aimed to support a maximum of two projects in London and three in the southeast but we did not achieve this goal – four of the Multipliers were based in London, though three of those leaders work nationally.
- **A mixture of personalities** (not all extroverts), as appraised in the pre-programme interviews – we achieved this.
- **Half over the age of 60, working on intergenerational projects or on projects with older people** – we achieved this, though there was no one over 60 in this first cohort.

“The selection of the group was bang on. One thing I struggled with in the past was thinking there weren’t people doing similar things to me in the community with my values. And you found 10 of them.”

“One of my favourite things about the programme was how diverse the group was. Even though we’re not in the same field, we could still relate to struggles and successes. It made me realise you don’t always have to be around people who are in your industry or like you.”

4. Streamline the online application process

In our focus groups, all of the leaders were positive about the recruitment process: people said they “*really liked the interview*” and “*felt supported and heard throughout the process*” and that the process was “*accessible and enjoyable*”. One Multiplier said that “*I hold you as my standard. I think [other programmes] are asking too much. You had straightforward, reasonable questions, no jargon and a really quick turnaround.*”

However, there were teething issues: Multipliers were applying for support from both UnLtd (the grant) and The Cares Family (the programme) and as a result had to fill out two online forms. In future, we should streamline that process so that it is a one-step application.

5. Select more founders as speakers and encourage co-production throughout

While Multipliers were generally positive about the people they heard from in the gatherings (“*The speakers were excellent, the calibre was phenomenal in such an intimate setting. Quite mind-blowing actually*”) in our focus groups some fed back that their favourite talks were from “*people who’d built their own organisations: it was relatable, they had been through it.*”

In addition, while we tailored programme content using information from our pre-programme and midpoint surveys as well as snapshot surveys conducted after each gathering, and while we tried to react to feedback as we progressed, giving the group greater ownership over gathering content – including by empowering Multipliers to lead some sessions themselves – could enhance The Multiplier in future.

6. Hold follow up sessions to embed learning

While The Multipliers reported that they thought the sequence of the workshops was key to the success of the programme, (“*The breadcrumbs – you left us thinking about something that the next session would address, it was really well crafted*”, “*We’d discuss things that we’d talked about earlier. The picture just became clearer and clearer*”) some also shared that it would have been useful to have follow ups after each gathering. This would have enabled the leaders to work through what had been discussed in more detail, so that they could help one another to put theory into practice, and to hold each other to account in writing things like vision and strategy documents.

“Every single workshop we had I left knowing what I wanted to do but after a few days back at work this fell to the bottom of the pile. In my notebook there was gold but there were not conversations or tasks that solidified the learning. We needed more homework.”

7. Continue with the hybrid delivery approach to support accessibility

We originally planned for all gatherings to be in person, but due to the pandemic, we were only able to come together in person for the very last session. There were unforeseen benefits to this. For those with caring responsibilities and/or physical disabilities which made travel challenging, holding most of the programme online made it more accessible.

For those Multipliers living in Belfast, Cornwall and rural Wales, having the programme online meant not having to travel long distances or stay away from home each month. One Multiplier said *“I found the digital format to be quite key to the success. I would encourage you to think about it for the future.”* The Cares Family was also able to invest money that we would have spent on travel, venues and accommodation into additional training for The Multipliers.

And yet many found Zoom a difficult medium for the gatherings, and a majority said they regretted that the sessions were not all in person. One Multiplier said, *“I’m susceptible to migraines. On Zoom there were times when I couldn’t take any more in.”* Nearly everyone cited the in person gathering as a highlight, with one Multiplier sharing that *“nothing beats the feeling when we are together”*.

For future cohorts, we should take a mixed approach, with at least the first and last gatherings taking place in person and others online. We should also build more breaks into online gatherings – encouraging people to get up from their desks and out for a quick walk – and put in place sessions where people can speak to each other on the phone, rather than looking at screens for excessive periods.

One Multiplier suggested it would be good for the in person gatherings to be hosted at Multipliers’ projects across the country where they have a physical space, so as to allow the leaders to *“see on the ground what has been achieved and how this learning can be adapted for [their] own project”*. If there was sufficient funding, this could also be a great way of ensuring that the programme doesn’t become London-centric.

8. Change the process for matching coaches

We matched every Multiplier with a coach before gatherings had begun. In a majority of instances, the coaching relationships worked well, but a handful of Multipliers struggled to fit in coaching calls on top of their other commitments, and in other cases Multipliers would have benefited from us better knowing their needs before matching them with a coach.

In future, the matching process could happen after gatherings have begun, and instead of everyone being matched with a coach by default, Multipliers could put themselves forward for the experience, detailing one to three specific challenges they want support with.

9. Review the peer-to-peer support

In our end of programme survey and focus groups, the main area in which participants indicated The Multiplier programme could be improved was peer-to-peer support. When asked to rank how the experience of being matched with a peer was overall, four of the Multipliers ranked peer support calls *“somewhat helpful”* and two selected *“not at all helpful”*.

In the pre-programme survey we had asked whether Multipliers would like to be matched up for one-to-one peer support calls. Everyone signed up for this, and in March we introduced the matches. Due to the many constraints the Multipliers had on their time, we decided to keep this informal, recommending they had three phone calls during the programme, at a time that worked for them.

While this worked well with a few of the matches, for many the informality meant that calls either never really happened or were not as useful as other aspects of the programme. Multipliers shared that they worried about being *“bossy or taking the reins”*. Others suggested that the matches would have been helpful if they came with more structure: perhaps a crib sheet with questions and exercises to work through together or a project – such as a presentation to the group or funders – that they could work on collaboratively.

10. Host adaptive leadership challenge clinics for everyone

The group also said that they would have liked more time to hear about each other’s projects. At our final gathering, which took place in person, the group took part in an adaptive leadership exercise, in which one Multiplier shared a challenge they were facing, and the group asked questions to help create a sharper diagnosis, before talking through potential solutions.

Some Multipliers said this was their favourite part of the whole programme, and that they wished everyone had had an opportunity to dissect and solve a challenge in this way. This adaptive leadership ‘challenge clinic’ could become a regular activity for future cohorts as well as the alumni programme because *“the more thoughts on a problem the better... You learn a lot from other people applying their perspectives.”*

Conclusion

“When I applied for and started The Multiplier programme, never could I have imagined the journey it was going to take me on. I’ve been challenged, motivated, inspired, reminded of things I already knew, taught new things and made to unlearn some things I thought I knew.”

Disconnection is everywhere, but so are the solutions that will help us to thwart it. In the midst of a pandemic, in which everyone gained some understanding of the realities of isolation, and with The Cares Family’s own understanding of how difficult this work can be firmly in mind, we set out to support those who were connecting their communities. Many people are putting brilliant, often simple, ideas into practice to usher in a more connected age, and in 2021, we selected 10 people from across the UK who were building bridges in their own communities in their own ways and supported them to meet the challenges they – and the rest of the country – would face in the Covid-19 recovery.

Though The Multiplier was untested – and applications were only open for two weeks – 129 people put themselves forward to be part of it. It became clear just how much untapped potential there is in communities. People across the UK are driving community-led solutions to improve mental health, reduce suicide and tackle racism, sexism and health inequalities – and with access to a bit of funding, new networks, peer support, relational learning and opportunities to tell their story, the impact they are making can be multiplied.

By working together, we can make a greater impact than we would alone, so over the next four years we will build on this pilot and through future Multiplier cohorts, invest with partners in a further 40 people tackling disconnection everywhere.

Together we can create a ripple of connection – tackling separation at the roots; challenging misperceptions and stereotypes; helping power to better understand community, and communities to better leverage their collective power.

The Cares Family

<https://www.thecaresfamily.org.uk>

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