

# Connecting through change

**Investigations**  
Work in progress

Start date: Autumn 2010

How can we connect different communities and strengthen civil culture to help Bradford become a more equal and dynamic city?

Previous JRF work on 'Communities Bradford' showed that a powerful platform for influence can be created when people who are rarely heard are supported to share their views and experience.

But it also highlighted gaps in understanding and engagement across the city, for example, between officials and communities, between different groups according to geography, class, ethnicity, or faith. Negative media images of the city make it even more difficult to have much-needed discussion on important but sensitive issues.

## This programme will:

- help to connect communities and improve local policies and service provision.

## We aim to:

- support a wider range of communities to connect with each other on issues they identify as important;
- promote stronger engagement between communities and senior stakeholders (those with access to power and resources, such as policy-makers, service commissioners and providers, and employers).

We will:

- bring together different groups to identify and discuss important and often difficult issues;
- produce independent evidence and analysis to inform policy; and
- contribute to civil leadership and culture.

## Contact

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**For the latest information, visit:**  
[www.jrf.org.uk/bradford](http://www.jrf.org.uk/bradford)

## At a glance

**Programme title:** Connecting through change

**Aim:** To help connect communities and improve local policies and service provision

**Timescale:** 2010–2014

**Budget:** £445,000

**Contact:** Bana Gora (Programme manager)

From 2010 to 2014, the JRF aims to help connect communities and improve local policies and service provision in Bradford. This paper outlines what we are doing, why, and what we hope to achieve through this work.

This information is correct at the start of the programme. However, our programmes of work develop throughout their course. For the most up-to-date information, visit: [www.jrf.org.uk/bradford](http://www.jrf.org.uk/bradford)

## What is the issue?

Our Communities Bradford programme [www.jrf.org.uk/work/workarea/bradford-programme](http://www.jrf.org.uk/work/workarea/bradford-programme) pointed to the powerful platform for influence created when people whose voices are seldom heard are supported to share their views and experience.

However, that work also highlighted gaps in understanding and engagement across the city, for example, between council officials and communities, between different communities marked by geography, class, ethnicity, or faith, and across agencies. Negative media images of the city make it even harder to open up much-needed discussion on important but sensitive issues.

The challenge for this programme is:

- to support a wider range of community and unheard voices to connect with each other on issues that have been identified as important from within communities; and
- to support and promote more direct, deeper engagement between communities and senior stakeholders (i.e. people with access to power and resources – policy-makers, service commissioners, providers, employers, etc.).

These are all issues that are important to people, businesses and communities in Bradford. They also match the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's key themes of poverty, place and empowerment. In this way, we hope to build evidence that is useful and practical in Bradford and also across the UK.

## What do we want to achieve?

We aim to provide practical support to help the city and people of Bradford, at a time when public spending cuts mean that communities can no longer rely on local government to fulfil many of their key service needs.

This programme aims to kick-start structured engagement with, and support for, public services and communities to co-create and develop solutions to pressing social problems in Bradford. At a time where service providers are looking for practical models of work, this work will test and evaluate the benefits of this approach for wider dissemination, whilst providing practical development support to demonstrate what can be achieved.

Building on lessons from our earlier 'Communities Bradford' programme, we will:

- bring together different groups – including those who may not usually be heard in such debates – to identify and discuss important and often difficult issues;
- produce independent evidence and analysis to inform policy; and
- contribute to civil leadership and culture.

It is expected that these projects will report their findings in 2011.

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This programme will be relevant to:

- statutory and voluntary organisations working with disadvantaged communities in Bradford;
- local businesses;
- local employers and entrepreneurs;
- service providers (public and voluntary sector); and
- community-based organisations and groups.

## What are we doing?

JRF is funding work in the following three areas:

1. **Social Futures Awards** scheme in partnership with UnLtd (<http://www.unltd.org.uk/>)

Through up to 13 awards (with a high level of bespoke support and mentoring) this scheme will help to connect different communities and agencies and strengthen civil culture so that Bradford is better placed to become a more equal and dynamic city.

UnLtd's mission is "to reach out and unleash the energies of people who can transform the world in which they live". It is a national charity which provides financial and non-financial support for individuals and informal groups with entrepreneurial solutions to social problems.

2. **Connecting through research** – in partnership with Bradford Resource Centre

A 'Bradford Monitor' will provide bulletins that pull together and analyse existing data (community research, Bradford Observatory data, etc.) on issues identified locally. The Monitor will provide support and build capacity for community research as a way to connect different communities.

3. **JRF events and Roundtables (2011)**

JRF has established itself as a place to convene in Bradford, including small commissions to stimulate debates on important and difficult issues. This will help us to fulfil our aim of connecting across communities, and between communities and agencies.

## Why is this topic a priority for JRF?

In 2004 the JRF made a ten-year commitment to working in Bradford. This work is part of that programme. It reflects our aim to be more directly engaged in connecting community voices to each other and to civil leaders.

The programme also expresses JRF's longstanding commitment to addressing poverty and disadvantage, and its unique relationship with the city and people of Bradford.

## What has informed our thinking?

This programme stems from previous work on Bradford, which includes evidence from research and development work. It also ties in with JRF's aim to reduce poverty and inequality by empowering people to have control of their own lives.

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## About the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust are two independent charities that work together to understand the root causes of social problems, identify ways of overcoming them, and show how social needs can be met in practice.

Our purpose is to influence policy and practice by searching for evidence and demonstrating solutions to improve:

- The circumstances of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage;
- The quality of their homes and communities;
- The nature of the services and support that foster their well-being and citizenship.

Most of our work centres on the interconnected themes of poverty, place and empowerment.

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