

**As a responsive grant-maker operating across a number of sectors we have had to think long and hard about effectiveness. The size of our funding and the number of grants we make across a diverse portfolio mean that quantitative analysis is of limited value and meaning. More importantly, our success lies with the success of those we fund. One of the most valuable ways to evaluate performance is to identify learning from our grants for both our grantees and ourselves so that we can constantly improve.**



To this end we asked the Centre, a leading provider of strategic and communications advice to the voluntary sector, to identify lessons from four grants we made in the policy arena: to the Green Fiscal Commission, the UK Drug Policy Commission (UKDPC), the Cambridge Primary Review, and the Rethinking Crime and Punishment (RCP) programme.

**Each addressed complex but critical areas of public policy and we wanted to see what could be learned from each approach.**

The **Green Fiscal Commission** ran from 2007–2009, led by Professor Paul Ekins of King's College London. Under the chairmanship of Robert Napier, the Commission's aim was to provide an expert narrative aimed at politicians, civil servants and other policy makers on the possibilities and consequences of environmental tax reform. Among the four projects, the Green Fiscal Commission was the only one that had cross-party representation at Commissioner level as well as drawing in a wide range of other stakeholders such as consumer groups, private-sector entities, and environmental groups. The Commission produced its final report in October 2009 with a launch at Westminster.

**UK Drug Policy Commission** launched in April 2007 for an initial three-year period, with funding for a further three years agreed in May 2009, under the chairmanship of Dame Ruth Runciman. Its overarching aim is to encourage a transparent and evidence-led UK drug policy that can improve the health, wellbeing and safety of individuals, families and communities. Twelve Commissioners bring together a broad range of expertise from the drug treatment and medical research fields along with senior figures from policing, public policy and the media. The Commission has produced a series of reports, submissions, articles and briefings, all of which are downloadable from its website ([www.ukdpc.org.uk](http://www.ukdpc.org.uk)). The emphasis is to bring about a more evidence-based approach to drug policy development.

The **Cambridge Primary Review** was the broadest review of primary education since the Plowden Report in 1967. Led by Professor Robin Alexander and his team in the Faculty of Education at Cambridge University, the review raised fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of primary education in the 21st century. An advisory committee of primary and early-years experts, led by Dame Gillian Pugh, complemented the academic team.

Impetus Trust – Leap Confronting Conflict project

Hilary Hodgson played a key role in managing the process while Richard Margrave handled the communications programme.

The review involved a complex drawing together of comprehensive academic research, consultation with practitioners, parents and children, and engagement with policy makers, alongside an ongoing media programme. During the course of the project (2006–2009) the review consistently caught the headlines and the attention of politicians and opinion formers.

We reported extensively on the Foundation's **Rethinking Crime and Punishment** programme in last year's annual report. The programme aimed to introduce fresh thinking into the criminal justice debate, with particular reference to the use of prison and its alternatives. Between 2001 and 2004, RCP supported over fifty projects working to increase public understanding of, and involvement in, criminal justice.

From 2005 to 2008 a focused programme looked to implement some of RCP's findings, particularly promoting confidence in the use of community-based sentencing as an alternative to prison.

These four pieces of policy work were different in form and substance.

UK Drug Policy Commission

While the Cambridge Primary Review was highly publicised, the Green Fiscal Commission focused on communicating with Whitehall and Westminster. UKDPC's work takes the form of a series of reports rather than culminating in a single comprehensive document, unlike the Green Fiscal Commission and the Cambridge Primary Review. What emerges from the Centre's review is that each benefited from a customised approach. The Foundation's key learning as a grant-maker is to ensure that communications (in the broadest sense) are built into the development of programmes aimed at influencing policy and are fully integrated into the project plan, rather than being seen either as an add-on or an afterthought; and that sufficient resources are set aside for these purposes.

Our interest in impact however has not been confined to the funding of policy work. The Foundation has continued to work with expert advisers on evaluation of our own work and that of some of our grantees, notably a cluster of grants to development trusts in conjunction with the Development Trust Association, and in looking across areas of funding, for example, the Food strand.

A growing part of the Foundation's work is carried out in partnership with other funders. We are now in the

second year of supporting Inspiring Scotland, a funding consortium initiated by Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland with the objective of creating a venture philanthropy approach to solving difficult social problems: in the first instance, young people at risk. This involvement means that funds are channelled to groups and organisations that we would have been unlikely to reach ourselves and we have the opportunity to participate and learn alongside other funders.

We have also been working with another venture philanthropy funder, the Impetus Trust, to create a Reducing Re-offending Fund; marrying our own experience in this field (derived from our RCP programme) with Impetus' expertise in organisation building. This is the first time that Impetus has selected a topic area for funding rather than backing single organisations. The fund brings together a number of funders in a steering group to oversee decision-making on applications, alongside the Impetus model of providing intensive support to grantees during the development stages.

All these approaches provide the Foundation with lessons for future funding and the opportunity to review our progress and that of our grantees.