

POWER TOOL: A CONCEPTUAL AND LEARNING FRAMEWORK FOR POWER IN OUR EXTERNAL WORK

Background

What we've learnt about power in our work with Brap and our own discussions, as it pertains to our external work and external partners (funding, influencing etc.):

- Power is often about who gets listened to and funded (and this ties to wider structural inequity including racism)
- Power is relational, you can have lots of power in certain circumstances with certain actors, and little in/with others. This dynamic isn't static but is about how we interact and influence/are influenced by different things. Who we and our partners know is therefore important. How we influence or are influenced is informed by different factors at different points in time.
- It's not just about money - it's also about the influence you have in different situations, and how ideas can support and constrain action.
- Power isn't zero sum i.e. if you have it, it doesn't mean someone else doesn't. It can be built - both for ourselves and our partners.
- In reality, our budgets are tiny in the grand scheme of the big societal challenges we're taking on (e.g. compared to the budgets of Big Food companies, the NHS etc.). We need to use our power intentionally, and harness the power of our networks with decision-makers, funders etc.
- Therefore, power is not just something we should always look to give away, and we should have faith in the expertise and approach we have and take, especially as we continue to improve how we centre race equity and lived experience

What we've already agreed that relates to power in our external work (by that we mean specifically whose perspectives and ideas are listened to, who gets funded, and the influence that we have):

- Our strategy should prioritise race equity and the lived experience of people living in L&S and who experience the brunt of health inequity
- Our process for grant making will become more participatory, and include representation of lived experience, so decisions on projects are made more equitably
- Our mission is to fund and collaborate with inspiring partners, to build health equity for people in Lambeth & Southwark and beyond
- And we've agreed that to do (3) well, we will employ four routes to impact: community-led deep work, developing or strengthening local pilots and projects, working with large institutions, influencing society-wide narratives

An approach for thinking about power in our external relationships

Why it's important:

- Our strategy outlines four routes to impact – this is what we will be doing. How we think about and relate to external stakeholders, each other and how we make decisions – this is how we use our power and is fundamental to getting the work done and achieving our mission. It is how we will have impact.
- To effectively address big societal health challenges like air pollution etc. we recognise that we need to take different approaches to using power
- We now need a tool that helps us to articulate how we are using our power, explore why we may take different approaches in different circumstances, and think about our use of power in the round across programmes

A tool to test:

This rapid review of philanthropy produced by brap explores how other funders are thinking about power. One approach is from The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy who have developed a [framework](#) for how foundations can build, share and wield power. We want to test this and learn from its application.

How We Enact Power	Examples from the Programmes (including route to impact)
<p>Wielding Power: Exercising public leadership (beyond grantmaking) to create equitable, catalytic change. This means using our power and connections to convene, support and collaborate. It includes using all our assets to bring visibility to issues and elevating marginalized communities by using their reputation to inform, raise awareness and advocate.</p>	<p>Influencing institutions through shifting practice in large institutions – ICS (<i>working with large institutions, community led deep work, developing or strengthening local pilots and projects</i>), Local Council, other funders and other influencing organisations – for instance on issues of equity and inclusion (<i>working with large institutions</i>) Policy & Influencing Activity with The Motherhood Group (<i>working with large institutions, influencing society-wide narratives</i>) Endowment Corporate Engagement activity (<i>working with large institutions</i>)</p>
<p>Sharing Power: Nurturing transparent, trusting relationships, co-creating strategies with stakeholders, sharing access to networks and opportunities. This means we are responsive, inclusive and transparent in our communication with partners, and we invest in their success. It includes soliciting input from communities we want to serve, going beyond the usual suspects. It encompasses our work around devolved decision-making structures.</p>	<p>CHF Ventures work (<i>developing or strengthening local pilots and projects, community-led deep work</i>) Black Thrive partnership (<i>community-led deep work</i>) Parent Panel (<i>community-led deep work, developing or strengthening local pilots and projects</i>) Safety Project (<i>community-led deep work</i>) Healthy Dialogues (<i>working with large institutions</i>)</p>
<p>Building Power: Supporting systemic change by funding civic engagement, advocacy and community organising among marginalised communities. This means we are explicit about advancing systemic equity for specific marginalized communities in our goals, strategies and operations and that we fund under-resourced communities so they are their own agents of change. It includes funding cross-issue approaches and funding for the long-term while also being responsive to emerging or urgent opportunities.</p>	<p>Core funding community embedded organisations (<i>community-led deep work, developing or strengthening local pilots and projects</i>) CHF re-framing work (<i>influencing society-wide narratives</i>) Children In Need – A Million & Me Prize (<i>influencing society-wide narratives, working with large institutions</i>) Advocacy Academy (<i>community-led deep work, developing or strengthening local pilots and projects</i>) Healing Justice London (<i>community-led deep work, developing or strengthening local pilots and projects</i>)</p>

Notes for Use:

- This is an intentionally reductive way of thinking about our work to tackle health inequity in Lambeth and Southwark. It is intended to offer a way to think about how we use power and how different forms of power might be adopted when considering different approaches to change.
- Like with the IoUH Strategy, we expect programmes and portfolios will incorporate a mix of approaches to change and different uses of power.
- Individual projects might also sit across a number of approaches and at different stages of change work, use different forms of power.
- Our Policy and Influencing team will likely develop an approach to inclusive policy development, to inform how we ‘wield’ power.
- Ultimately, we don’t want to be apologetic about the power we have but more thoughtful and intentional about how use it to achieve our mission.

Further resources [here](#).

How we plan to use this going forward:

- We will integrate power into Pipeline template

- We will develop a learning approach that helps us think about how we use our power well ie. can we organise our learning around how we use our power. When we wield our power – what happens? When we look to build or share power – what is the impact on us and out in the world?

Case Study: Parent Panel

The Parent Panel is an approach to exploring new ways of working with parents and caregivers to support the CMH programme in making decisions, prioritising and delivering a strategy that enables all children to thrive. It builds on the recommendations from The Marmot Review (2010) that highlights the key to addressing health inequalities is to create the conditions for people to take control of their own lives. The approach is an example of how we might shift power by nurturing transparent, trusting relationships and opening up our work and space to key stakeholders – the communities we work with and for - but also how we build communities' power to engage with decision makers and advocate for themselves.

This approach is ambitious and will require deep personal, group and organisational transformation along the way over time. We expect therefore that we will experience the benefit of opening ourselves up as a team and organisation to share design of our programmes with those people intended to benefit from it.

As a result, we believe that our investments will have greater breadth and depth of impact and meet the needs of families and children while we will continually improve our understanding of the drivers of children's mental health issues and their access to support.

By supporting the engagement of parents in our place through the delivery of the CMH programme, we think that the programme aims are more likely to be met and will have a longer-term impact beyond the programme. We envision that through participation in a parent panel, parents will be supported and trained to be more confident communicators and can directly lend their voice to re-framing narratives about behavioural difficulties and the support parents require. They could also be supported through this process to become advocates and campaigners themselves.

We think there may also be comms and influencing opportunities for parents such as content produced by/with parents, parents representing the programme at events and media opportunities in future phases of work.

Participation in a panel of this kind can also provide important benefits to the group's membership, offering opportunities to directly shape the direction of the programme and projects, to build relationships with staff members and other members of the group and to develop key transferrable skills.

This project works to both build and share power. It's an approach that supports community engagement and enables parents to advocate for themselves. The insight generated from the parent panel means as a programme we are also gathering insight about issues that might need us to be more responsive in the short term while also enabling us to continue investing in and tackling long term systemic issues.

The co-design process and the design of the Parent Panel centralize the idea that power is relational. As members of the CMH team were involved as co-designers alongside local parents, a few key insights emerged about how we enact power:

ONE: Bridging relationships is the practice of building connections and understanding with people who are different from us. They are vital and take intentionality to get going. We'll need to focus on this heavily within the Parent Panel, using this as one way to start and continue building relationships between Impact on Urban Health and our community of parents across the boroughs we serve.

TWO: It takes time to build trust and connection. How can we embed relationship-building across everything we do rather than view it as one step in the design journey? We learnt about invited spaces and the value and importance of opening up invited spaces to see change happen and shift power dynamics. Invited spaces are often created by decision makers to widen participation either through new or existing invited spaces where end users or citizens are invited to participate on a limited range of issues that may directly affect them.

THREE: Power can be shared or wielded through our choice of language. Therefore, how can we choose language that acknowledges choice and agency? Bring it openly and explicitly so people are enabled to work with us rather than to have relationships based on coercion.

FOUR: We need to invite collaboration explicitly and often. Sometimes we can assume collaboration will happen because we want it. If we explicitly invite collaboration, it's much more likely it will happen.

Case study: influencing the food industry, Children's Health and Food programme

Across the CHF programme we have a portfolio of partnerships that enact power in different ways to influence the food industry. And it's partly the sum of these partnerships that makes them so effective. We aim to tackle health inequities facing children from families on low incomes and wider forms of discrimination, through improving the healthiness of food and drink sold in shops and restaurants. We do this by both partnering with more progressive companies and challenging those lagging behind.

Our approaches include:

1. Direct engagement with companies via our endowment and in partnership with ShareAction. Here we **wield** our power as an investor to demand companies report on the proportion of their sales that are healthy and set targets to improve
2. Building the evidence base. We and partners act as learning partners and/or experts to evidence how change can happen in practice. Our priorities are increasing and evaluating action on the levers of price, promotions and advertising, placement and product availability in supermarkets and convenience stores. This has involved **sharing** our power with our partner Rice Marketing, through facilitating connections with the GLA, leading to a new project funded by the GLA, and a co-funded evaluation of that work. A steering group involving convenience store owners **builds** their power. This links to wider conversations our policy and influencing, and programmes teams had with the GLA, demonstrating our ability to **wield** power to influence their priorities.
3. Policy and influencing through funded partnerships, coalition work, and direct engagement allow us and partners to **wield** our power and influence policy makers. Given how well coordinated our partners are, we have **built** our collective power to influence policy through having clear policy asks, and a coordinated approach to generating evidence and effective arguments. And through working with our partners to improve their approaches to DEI – for example, through incorporating parent panels, youth boards, as well as Biteback 2030 growing a movement of young people engaged on food justice, we've supported partners to **share** their power and **build** the power of people with lived experience of food insecurity.
4. Disruptor/ innovator: supporting new solutions. Here we **wield** our power with partners to challenge and influence large food companies by taking away their sales of unhealthy food products, persuading families to buy healthier products by brands we support. We've **shared** our power with partners through facilitating conversations with policy makers. And our community ventures project works with a steering group of community and business leaders in Lambeth and Southwark who are from Black and minoritized backgrounds. They oversee initiatives that aim to **building** the capacity and power of local, Black food entrepreneurs to grow ventures that aim to improve the healthiness of food.

And a strategic question related to power that the team has been considering is whether the balance of local community vs national partners is right, and whether we could or should do more to **build** the power of the former.
