

Partner Up Impact Summary

Partner Up is an innovative package of funding and support designed to enable social change organisations to join forces on ambitious community projects. Led by Take Note, a pioneer in methods of collaboration, it was developed in partnership with funder Footwork and their online initiative Collaborative Change. In 2021-2022, Partner Up supported two creative partnerships between unlikely allies, both of which have had a considerable impact within - and far beyond - the places where they took place.

Partner Up fills a gap in support from other funders for collaborative projects. Even though funders often request that applicants work in partnership, their criteria and application processes do not reflect this. Nor do they provide funds specifically to support collaborations. The Partner Up model also developed a set of resources to support social change organisations to partner more successfully. These are much-needed in the sector if projects are to maximise their collaborative impact.

The core elements of the Partner Up model consisted of:

- £30K partnership project grants (£60K in total)
- A collaboration-focused grant application process
- A set of tools and resources to support and strengthen the partnership and project including collaborative project design, delivery and evaluation.
- Facilitated partnership 'Huddles', led by Take Note, that brought all the partners together at key moments throughout the project in a workshop setting to agree ways of working together, co-designing and planning the project and creating a safe and supportive space in which to reflect on any challenges or issues arising.

Partner Up Projects

Two projects - Fly The Flag and Bruk Up Stigma - were chosen to receive Partner Up support. Both projects represented bold alliances between arts, humanitarian and community support organisations using performance, dance and film to bring about social change in the areas of mental health and human rights, connecting grassroots organisations with partners operating at national and international levels.

Partner Up Aims

Partner Up aimed to empower the partners to work more effectively as a group and increase their understanding of best partnership practice, ultimately building their collective expertise and confidence to undertake partnership working in the future. We hoped that supporting the partners to strengthen their collaboration with each other would help maximise the impact of the partnership projects on their communities, enhancing, strengthening and sustaining the impact of the project on communities beyond the initial project delivery.

Partner Up Impact



88% of partners reported that Partner Up significantly supported in maximising the impact of the project on beneficiaries

“Partnering Up’ and collaborating with others allowed us to bring in new ideas, spark new work ... and challenged us to be braver about what we bring to families and young people.”



100% of partners reported that project delivery is to continue beyond the initial project timeframe

Bruk Up has evolved into a new mental health and music group Push for Positivity, set up by the young people themselves following their engagement with the project. Fly The Flag participants continue to connect through group outings to the MAC Belfast and the project itself is due to continue pending a successful application to the Northern Ireland Executive Office Good Relations fund.



88% of partners reported the Partner Up package significantly helped them work more effectively as a group

“We learnt how important it is to take time to think about expectations, understanding of ideas and different ways of working and cultures.”



Partners also reported that Partner Up increased their collective experience and confidence to undertake partnership working in the future

“The support package gave us foundational skills to use for large-scale future partnership projects.”

Longer term, and as part of the wider legacy of Partner Up, Take Note will continue to champion the power of collaboration, using the evidence of impact from Partner Up to make the case for this way of working. As a result of Partner Up, we have also created a new tool [Funding Collaborations: A Blueprint](#) that aims to help funders to apply these findings to their own priorities and processes. This tool sits alongside the [Take Note Collaboration Guidebook](#) for social change organisations. Both resources are now available as open source materials alongside the full Partner Up Impact Report on the [Take Note website](#) and are being shared widely by partner organisations across the UK.



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Recommendations



A brilliant resource and one I wish all funders offered

For funders



Offer specific **funding for collaborations**.



Interrogate your application process and consider whether it facilitates collaboration and encourages organisations to apply with others.



Fund the time it takes to collaborate well and encourage grantees to build in additional partnership development costs into their budgets.

For organisations



Clarify the 'why' - articulate together the shared vision and outcomes for the project and what you want it collectively to achieve.



Take time to set up the partnership - collaborations are most effective when partners build strong foundations, plot out each partner's roles and responsibilities and create a culture of shared accountability, clarity and commitment from all involved.



Give the partnership as much love as the project and include partnership development time in your project budget.



Partner Up enabled us to rise above our limited perspectives and build something together and connect through a common vision that kept the driving force of the project alive and helped us come together for a common cause.

→ Find out more about Partner Up and Take Note at www.wetakenote.org